

**SAN HERMENEGILDO AS A TROPE OF RHETORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL  
INVESTIGATION IN SPAIN, ITALY, AND MEXICO (1590-1690)**

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During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, San Hermenegildo, a Christian martyr who died in 585, became a recurrent presence on theatre stages in Europe and the Americas. Tragedies inspired by his death began to surface due to the efforts of the Society of Jesus, the religious order that used him to embody its theological and rhetorical agendas. This dissertation investigates the figure of San Hermenegildo as a stage character in the period comprised between 1590 and 1690. Specifically, it looks at five tragedies, two Spanish, two Italian, and one Mexican, to demonstrate how the treatment of the martyr varied widely according to geopolitical and rhetorical necessities. The subtle balance between the evident consistency of the Hermenegildo theatrical trope and the many differences traceable in the individual plays illuminates the powerful ideologies and the propagandistic objectives that Jesuit theatre came to embody during the Baroque era, as well as the struggle for power happening within and without the Society of Jesus. This study also examines how two non-Jesuit playwrights, Lope de Vega and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, challenged the tropological attributes with which the Society of Jesus had charged the saint; the first by focusing on pleasing the audience of the public theatre, the second by reinterpreting the story of Hermenegildo according to her subaltern position as Mexican creole and as a woman.

The most relevant implication of this dissertation is that of having demonstrated the tropological significance attached to saints and martyrs as stage characters during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the layered and rich connections existing between drama and

religious and political discourses. This is a particularly relevant finding especially in light of the fact that American academia has largely neglected to probe the religious theatre of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and much more needs to be accomplished in this field.

Given the interdisciplinary scope of the research, the dissertation employs many languages, including French, Spanish, Italian, and Latin, and major theoretical models such as colonial and post-colonial studies, history of ideas, rhetorical studies, and theatre and performance studies.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 DISSERTATION'S GOALS AND METHODOLOGIES

I developed an interest in the theatre of the Jesuits while I was a student in the Theatre Department of the Università La Sapienza in Rome, Italy. My graduation thesis, *Teoria e prassi del dramma gesuitico: il punto di vista di Sforza Pallavicino*, was an investigation of how Jesuit Cardinal Sforza Pallavicino conceptualized the tragic genre as a didactical and religious tool and exemplified his ideas in his tragedy *San Ermenegildo*. While researching the topic of Saint Hermenegildo in theatre, I became increasingly aware of the fact that Pallavicino's version was only one of many tragedies which were staged and published between the late sixteenth and the end of the seventeenth centuries throughout Catholic Europe. According to Jean-Marie Valentin, there were 32 theatrical pieces dealing with the martyrdom of this Spanish saint written between 1622 and 1769.<sup>1</sup> However, Pierantonio Frare believes the actual number might be even higher, as new stage versions of the story continue to be unearthed by librarians and theatre historians.<sup>2</sup> I also realized that even though Hermenegildo always maintained his preeminent status as a Jesuitical character, the topic of the saint's martyrdom also moved outside of the Society of Jesus's theatrical domain, becoming a key character in professional religious theatre. The omnipresence of Hermenegildo posits fascinating questions to the researcher. What is the

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Marie Valentin, *Le theater des Jésuites dans les pays de langue allemande (1554-1680)* (Bern & Frankfurt: Lang, 1978), quoted in Emanuele Tesauo, *Ermenegildo*, edited by Pierantonio Frare and Michele Gazich (Rome: Vecchiarelli Editore, 2002), xiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

motivation behind the exhumation of an historical figure who was already, in the sixteenth century, a thousand years old and had been long removed from the national and cultural imagery? What are the tenets of the story of Hermenegildo that helped shape the Jesuits' vision of the world? What does the "making" of a Jesuitical tragedy tell the modern scholar about the literary aims and practical aspirations of the Society of Jesus? What are the dramaturgical devices operating within each version of the story of Hermenegildo? How does the Hermenegildo story change when it is a non-Jesuit dramatist who writes it? Those were a few of the questions that continued to fascinate me and drive my research.

The recurrence, permanence, and internationality of Hermenegildo as a theatrical character is not merely interesting from a scholarly point of view because of its ubiquity, it is also haunting because it has been bypassed and unacknowledged by scholars everywhere. In fact, in spite of the popularity of Hermenegildo during the Baroque, there is neither a complete investigation dealing with his role and relevance as the Jesuits' Christian hero, nor an in-depth study of more than one of the tragedies inspired by his martyrdom.

The story of Hermenegildo as a theatrical character is affected profoundly by the cultural context within which it was created. This dissertation will deal with five versions of the saint's martyrdom, written in three different countries, the analysis of which will provide a meaningful framework for the discussion of Hermenegildo as stage character.

Chapter I will provide a general outlook on the exegesis and history of the Hermenegildo character by looking at the historical personage while illustrating the tenets of his story that appealed to the post-Tridentine Church and to the Society of Jesus. Chapter II will delve into the first two tragedies, the Spanish *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, written in 1590 by Jesuit priests Hernando de Ávila and Melchor de la Cerda together with Juan de Arguijo, and *Mayor*



*Corona*, attributed to prolific Golden Age dramatist Lope de Vega, who studied in a Jesuit school in 1574 and became a priest in 1614 but never officially belonged to the Society of Jesus. In chapter III, the investigation will move to Italy and address two tragedies written by two well-known Jesuit figures. Emanuele Tesauro wrote his *Ermenegildo* in 1659, following loosely his own *Hermenegildus*, a Latin version of the same story he wrote in 1621, and Cardinal Sforza Pallavicino composed his *San Ermenegildo* for the Jesuit Collegio Romano in 1644. While these two works reflect the same religious concerns about reaffirming the dogmas of the Trinity as well as the divinity of Christ, they are very different in their structure and dramaturgy from the Spanish versions. This chapter will compare the Spanish and Italian accounts of the martyrdom of the saint in order to stress the differences existing in the seventeenth century between the theatres of the two countries. It will also highlight how *Hermenegildo* as a trope was in constant flux, and his propelling motifs adapted to geo-historical, as well as literary differences. Finally, in chapter IV, I will delve into Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *El mártir del sacramento*, *San Hermenegildo*, an *auto sacramental* she composed between 1680 and 1688. Sor Juana's position is quite interesting because she was a woman and a nun, and she was a Creole living in the colony of New Spain, Mexico. Her gender and geographical otherness provide two interesting critical angles through which to examine her work and to investigate the issues of inclusion and exclusion within the world of the Society of Jesus.

Framing the discussion of the five plays between 1590 and 1690 is not a casual choice. The first tragedy I examine was written in 1590 in Spain, while the last one was composed in Mexico at the end of 1680s. The theoretical reason for choosing these one hundred years lies in the fact that they comprise roughly what many scholars of the seventeenth century, including José Antonio Maravall, define as the Baroque era, a time when art was a propagandistic

instrument in the hands of political and religious powers; when the Catholic Church ruled; when all arts were part of a mass culture driven by conservatism; and, ultimately, a historical period suspended between a profound sense of crisis and the illusion of eternity.<sup>3</sup> These characteristics define and explain both secular and religious theatre produced during this time.

All these elements are evident, to different degrees, in the five dramatic works that this dissertation addresses. Jesuit theatre was indeed politically geared, conservative at heart, mass produced worldwide in every college of the Society of Jesus, and inspired by both the excitement of future changes and the fear of the challenges presented by the Reformation. Nevertheless, the theatre of the Society of Jesus differs greatly as it emphasizes and reflects specific aspects of the culture where it was staged, as well as the particular needs of the Catholic Church of the nation where it was represented. I am including in my dissertation two Spanish, two Italian and one Mexican versions of the story of Hermenegildo because these five works showcase the diversity of the Jesuits' theatre, and because they are quite different from each other both in dramatic structure and content. Some are plot driven, others are character driven; some stress the theological and dogmatic meanings of the story, while others aim at simply entertaining the public by any possible means; finally, some are heavily influenced by the Renaissance's neo-Aristotelianism, while others display a freedom of form that breaks away from any set of rules. By including these five tragedies I intend to disprove the assumption that the Jesuitical theatre is founded on a dramaturgical formula that repeats itself. While it is true that the basic outline of the story does not change drastically, both the characterization and the emplotting strategies are

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<sup>3</sup> "From the outset, the baroque writer was concerned with containing the inexorable period of decline, with achieving the best possible circumstances for this decline, with prolonging its end. ... Decay and renewal were complementary elements of the baroque's thematic." Maravall, José Antonio. *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure* (trans. By Terry Cochran). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 181.

shaped to signify different religious and rhetorical conceptions, according to the individual dramatist's objectives as well as to the national and cultural traditions of the country.

This work will also tackle the differences existing between the three Jesuit tragedies of Hernando de Ávila, Emanuele Tesauro, and Sforza Pallavicino and those of Lope de Vega and Juana Inés de la Cruz, who were not part of the Society of Jesus but either studied in a Jesuit college or kept a close spiritual relationship with Jesuit priests. In discussing how these two authors struggled to belong and separate themselves from the principal rhetorical and theological tenets of the *Hermenegildo* story, this dissertation will draw on notions of subalternity and hegemonic discourse.

## **1.2 THEORETICAL FRAME**

Both *Hermenegildo*'s recurrence as a stage character in many countries over a relatively short period of time and the theological and rhetorical significations embedded in his stage persona qualify him as a trope. The Webster Collegiate Dictionary defines trope as "the use of a word or expression in a figurative sense" and also, in its second definition, as "a phrase or verse added as an embellishment or interpolation to the sung parts of the Mass in the medieval period." Both definitions retain and embody the meaning of symbol and metaphor, of something that stands for something else, whether because it aims at embellishing it or because it represents it in a different and unusual manner. These definitions also appear to be connected to the notion of fictional representation and theatrical display, literally in the case of the medieval theatre, and metaphorically in the case of the figurativeness conveyed by the trope. They allude to the idea of

something ‘original’ and ‘authentic’ from which something else that resembles, or represents it, is derived. Whether it is a symbol standing in for an original idea, or a metaphor that brings about relationships of dependency and hierarchy between the objects it analogizes, the trope accounts both for a multilayered association and an epistemological simultaneity. In *Symbolism of Evil*, Paul Ricoeur summons up the pivotal purpose of symbol as hermeneutics when he claims that “what the symbol gives rise to is thinking” and then concludes “it is by *interpreting* that we can *hear* again. Thus it is in hermeneutics that the symbol’s gift of meaning and the endeavor to understand by deciphering are knotted together.”<sup>4</sup>

The capacity of symbols to clarify reality by providing the observer with multiple interpretive frames is connected to their malleability and their plurifunctional properties. The Greek *trópos* and the Latin *tropus* connote the word with the meanings of ‘turn and turning’, therefore implying a notion of change and manipulation inherent in the word. Not surprisingly, trope is often used in connection with rhetoric and eloquence, two disciplines that are historically associated with persuasive and effective communication. In fact, trope encompasses figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, and synecdoche, where a comparison is established between objects that might, or might not, share conceptual or analytical similarities. In this regard, a trope states an identity between the two objects while simultaneously stressing their independence from each other. In discussing Ricoeur’s notion of metaphor, Mara Donaldson argues that “metaphors (a) involve semantic innovation, (b) which consists in constructing or inventing resemblances or similarities between dissimilars, and (c) which tell us something new and innovative about the world. Metaphors are for Ricoeur models of true redescription.”<sup>5</sup> Metaphors

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967), 349.

<sup>5</sup> Mara Donaldson, *Holy Places Are Dark Places: C.S. Lewis and Paul Ricoeur on Narrative Transformation* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), 36.

point to the necessity to signify in different manners, demonstrate the implicit limits of words to describe reality, and enlarge possible significations.

The trope as interpretive device to study the presence of Hermenegildo as a theatrical character provides both the theoretical and historical defining frame for this dissertation. In addressing the interpretation of religious symbols, W.M. Urban identifies the tropological meaning of symbols as part of the so-called ‘fourfold method’:

The interpretation called tropological applied specifically to the moral lesson which might be learned from an event –the assumption of purpose, of teleological meaning, in nature and history being an underlying postulate of all symbolism. (...) The tropological interpretation of the symbol was always an important aspect both of Christian practice and theory. The moral significance of the symbol –its meaning for life, both individual and social– has always been stressed.<sup>6</sup>

The saint, who became a character in a Jesuit play in the late sixteenth century and rapidly established himself as a cultural hero on both European and colonial stages, invites the scholar to ponder the layered connections between the religious theatre of the time and the historical and religious realities brought about by the Thirty Years’ War and the Counter Reformation. In the midst of the Protestant attacks against the Church and its political aspirations, the Jesuit hero defines himself as a primary symbol of Christ and a propagandistic tool for Catholic theological and political ideologies. It is quite poignant that the use of the Latin word *propagare*, from which the word propaganda derives, “was first used in 1622, the year of the establishment of the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide by Pope Gregory XV.”<sup>7</sup> This dissertation considers Hermenegildo as a telescopic lens (a *cannocchiale*, to use a metaphor dear

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<sup>6</sup> W.M. Urban, *Language and Reality: The Philosophy of Language and the Principles of Symbolism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1939), 598.

<sup>7</sup> Zygmunt Hubner, *Theater & Politics*, ed. and trans. by Jadwiga Kosicka (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 84.

to Italian intellectuals of the seventeenth century) which reflected and refracted some of the most common ideological tenets of the time and magnified them for contemporary audiences to see and ponder.<sup>8</sup> Hermenegildo became a theatrical metaphor enabling the Catholic hierarchies to address issues that were important to them and to embody the vision of the world of the Post-Tridentine Church. As an ideological trope, Hermenegildo transcended the boundaries of his own narrative and expanded into describing new and particular ideas.

In his landmark book *The Rule of Metaphor*, Paul Ricoeur highlights the expanding power of signification of the metaphor and its ability to shift from semantics to hermeneutics:

...the issue is no longer the *form* of metaphor as a word-focused figure of speech, nor even just the *sense* of metaphor as a founding of a new semantic pertinence, but the *reference* of the metaphorical statement as the power to 're-describe' reality. The most fundamental support of this transition from semantics to hermeneutics is to be found in the connection in all discourse between sense, which is its internal organization, and reference, which is its power to refer to a reality outside of language. Accordingly, metaphor presents itself as a strategy of discourse that, while preserving and developing the creative power of language, preserves and develops the *heuristic* power wielded by *fiction*.<sup>9</sup>

While Ricoeur is merely discussing the linguistic implications of metaphor and its value as a strategy of signification, it is also true that his premise can be easily extended to other phenomena such as historical and theatrical characters. Hermenegildo, in fact, becomes a metaphor the very moment the historical personage becomes a stage character in a Jesuit play and an ideological message is attached to his presence. The strategic signification of Hermenegildo as metaphor is evident in how the dramatists writing about the Spanish prince

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<sup>8</sup> Leslie Levin used a similar theoretical approach in her book *Metaphors of Conversion in Seventeenth Century Spanish Drama* (London: Tamesis, 1999), where the author explores the relationship between symbols used by Spanish dramatists and those employed by preachers and painters during the Golden Age.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny, with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 6.

make him analogous to Christ, thus turning him into a vehicle of signification impermeable to secular criticism. Since Hermenegildo is following the example of Christ, whom every true Christian should imitate in their lives, he is worthy of emulation and less prone to be attacked, even when he embodies controversial anti-monarchical ideas. While the preference of metaphor over literalness could be seen as the reflection of the theological difficulty to discuss God or the greatness of Christ's sacrifice for humanity, as some scholars have argued, it is undeniable that Hermenegildo 'needed' to function as a metaphor, because the ideological values embodied by his character were highly compromising and sometimes dangerous for the Catholic Church and its most valiant defenders, the Jesuits.<sup>10</sup> A play tackling head-on the topics of regicide, missionary urgency, and the superiority of the Pope over the monarch was simply unfeasible. The martyr Hermenegildo was an appropriate and convenient ideological vehicle for addressing those controversial ideas because it used the apparently uncommitted and unthreatening frame provided by the theatrical medium, and because it masked dangerous ideas behind Hermenegildo's devotional *imitatio Christi*. Furthermore, by tackling a historical episode that happened one thousand year earlier, the Hermenegildo trope 'escapes into history' and functions as 'drama of allusion', to use an expression coined by Zygmunt Hubner. Ostensibly it distances itself from the present to avoid the criticism of the Church's opponents, while at the same time establishing historical parallelism between the past and the present times.<sup>11</sup>

As a powerful ideological tool, Hermenegildo embraced the unique values of the cultures of Spain, Italy, and Mexico, and the specific challenges of the time, but he also coalesced these

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<sup>10</sup> "Almost from the beginning, Christian theologians were concerned about how every language is to be extended in the realm of the Divine. Augustine reminded his readers that the writers of the Scriptures constantly made use of metaphor, parable, and allegory when speaking about God, so that one needs to be sensitive to the different modes of literary discourse in order to grasp the precise sense intended by the author." Ernan McMullin, "The Motive of Metaphor." Zdravko Radman, ed., *From a Metaphorical Point of View A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Cognitive Content of Metaphor* New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 376. The author also talks about Thomas Aquinas's use of analogy to approximate the linguistic discussion of God, (377-378).

<sup>11</sup> Hubner, 65.

values into a readable and easily accessible narrative. Hermenegildo's power of signification speaks directly to the notion of ideological discourse that Ben B. Halm describes as prescriptive and flexible in nature, culturally based, and geared toward inclusiveness:

Culture is, in my view, as much a subset of ideology as ideology is a subuniverse of culture; culture is a body of choices and practices legitimated by ideology; culture and ideology, both, make things not only thinkable (as opposed to being unthinkable or taboo) but also eminently "do-able." Both mark some things as values ("dos") in contrast to others that are taboos (don'ts") and make their doing not only felicitous but also necessary (...) Ideology is a means of rationalizing and organizing either the paramount ideas, values, norms, and conventions within a given culture or merely those that pertain to parts or decoupled spheres of activity within that culture.<sup>12</sup>

Ben B. Halm aptly explains the interdependency of culture and ideology, as well as the metaphorical essence of ideology, when he states that "ideology is eminently plural and metaphorical in its forms and modes of operation."<sup>13</sup>

Being a highly symbolical medium, theatre was instrumental in bridging the gap between theology and effective communication. The stage offered both Jesuit and non-Jesuits dramatists the exceptional opportunity to re-present the newly defined values of the Catholic Church and shape the ethical and theological ideals of the new Christian. As a place for representing individual and collective aspirations, theatre was the obvious medium to interrogate and manipulate the potential for signification of the Hermenegildo trope and shape him into a polysemic instrument capable of containing the ideological agenda of the Catholic Church.

W.M. Urban reinforces the necessity and effectiveness of dramatic narratives in religious discourse and emphasizes the inherent difficulty of making sense of dogmatic beliefs without the support of symbolical thinking and figurative representation. He claims that religious language

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<sup>12</sup> Ben B. Halm, *Theatre and Ideology* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1995), 48.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.



must employ dynamic and accessible patterns of discourse if it aims at convincing the reader: “It is for this reason that theology, which seeks to systematize these relations must, in its reasoning, as well as in its descriptions, be dramatic in character; otherwise it could not communicate its meanings.”<sup>14</sup> The story of the Spanish martyr provides a highly suggestive narrative and unique opportunity for symbol-making because it relies on stark dramatic oppositions (father/son, Catholicism/Arianism, total innocence/total evilness, etc.) which Harald Hoffding claims to be the very foundations of symbols: “it is chiefly from the great fundamental relations of nature and of human life –light and darkness, power and weakness, life and death, spirit and matter, good and evil- that the material for symbol-making is drawn.”<sup>15</sup>

While this dissertation aims at investigating thoroughly the connections between Hermenegildo as a stage character and the theological and political statements attached to his presence, it will also concentrate on contextualizing him according to the geo-historical realities and literary traditions in which the plays inspired by his character are written and staged. As Ricoeur explains, the ‘resemblance’ between the objects brought under the same interpretive lens by the metaphor speak to their difference as well as to their similarities. If, as he says, “resemblance itself must be understood as a tension between identity and difference in the predicative operation set in motion by semantic innovation,” then the focus of this research will be both on the significance of Hermenegildo’s analogizing intents, as well as on his particular artistic scope as a character in a play. The emphasis will constantly shift from the Hermenegildo who lives in the pages of the five chosen plays to the character’s inherent vocation to symbolize Christ and the various ideological stances of the Church, to the artistic and rhetorical intents of

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<sup>14</sup> W.M. Urban, 581-582.

<sup>15</sup> Harald Hoffding, *The Philosophy of Religion* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1906), 207.

the individual dramatists. Ricoeur clarifies the intellectual struggle inherent in the study of symbols in relation to the ever changing nature of symbols and their iconoclastic nature:

It is necessary, then, to participate in the struggle, in the dynamics, in which the symbolism itself becomes a prey to a spontaneous hermeneutics that seeks to transcend it. It is only by participating in this dynamics that comprehension can reach the strictly critical dimension of exegesis and become a hermeneutic; but then one must abandon the position –or rather, the exile- of the remote and disinterested spectator, in order to appropriate in each case a particular symbolism.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, W.M. Urban says that “the essence of the religious symbol in all its forms is that it both is and is not the truth about the object symbolized.”<sup>17</sup> This dissertation attempts to investigate the theatrical trope of Hermenegildo in all its complexities, without turning it into a mere ideological vehicle. There is, of course, a strong and indisputable theological and rhetorical trajectory described in the stories of the saint portrayed by the five works I investigate, but there are also a number of factors that affect and disrupt, sometimes noticeably, that path. The analysis of these five dramatic pieces account for the differentiations existing among Jesuit dramatists (Spanish Jesuits versus Italian Jesuits), the diversity of the religious backgrounds of the dramatists (Jesuit and non-Jesuit), their genders (male and female), social positions (courtier and teacher), the time period when they composed their work (the end of the sixteenth century and the end of the seventeenth century), and the issue of the “positionality” intrinsic in their dramatic creations (colonial Europe and colonized America). All these perspectives will illustrate different ideological facets of Hermenegildo as a tropological character and will highlight the ongoing dialogue happening within and without the Society of Jesus.

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<sup>16</sup> Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 354.

<sup>17</sup> W.M. Urban, 585.

### 1.3 SCHOLARLY REVIEW

The theatre of the Jesuits has been a subject of investigation for renowned scholars all over Europe in the last fifty years. Fostered by a renewed interest in the Baroque rhetoric both as a tool of persuasion and education, many scholars have attempted to locate Jesuitical theatre at the very core of the dominant religious and political discourses.<sup>18</sup> The books and articles about the theatrical output of the Society of Jesus, together with editions of single tragedies accompanied by rich philological commentaries, are helping to reconstruct an important educational, theatrical, and historical experience that had been dismissed too soon and too arbitrarily by critics up until the 1950s. Some of the more interesting books about this topic date back only a few decades. Nigel Griffin, Jean-Marie Valentine, Julio Alonso Asenjo, William High McCabe, Marc Fumaroli, Gian Paolo Brizzi, Jesús Menéndez Peláez,<sup>19</sup> are only some of the noted scholars who investigated the theatre of the Society of Jesus, and their work is listed in my bibliography. The scholarly investigation of the theatre of the Jesuits prompted its own international conference in 1994, “I gesuiti e i primordi del teatro barocco in Europa.” On this occasion scholars of the caliber of Marc Fumaroli, Ruprecht Wimmer, Jacques Truchet, Silvia Carandini, Julio Alonso Asenjo, and Irene Kadulka, gathered in the rooms of the Università Gregoriana of Rome to discuss the artistic, religious, and political values of the theatre produced in the Jesuits’ colleges. The conference ended with the staging of the Jesuit Federico della Valle’s *Iudit*. But

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<sup>18</sup> See Gino Benzoni, *Gli affanni della cultura; Intellettuali e potere nell’Italia della Controriforma* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1978); Gian Paolo Brizzi, *La ‘Ratio Studiorum’ modelli culturali e pratiche educative dei Gesuiti in Italia tra Cinque e Seicento* (Rome : Bulzoni, 1981).

<sup>19</sup> Peláez wrote in 1995 *Los jesuitas y el teatro en el siglo de oro*, a milestone text for any future study on the topic of Jesuit theatre. This book contains the edition of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* of 1590 that I will be using in my dissertation.

while interest continues to grow throughout Europe, North American theatre historians have largely ignored the theatre of the Society of Jesus, leaving the study of it to Spanish and Italian departments.

For an exhaustive bibliography about Jesuit college theatre I direct the reader to Nigel Griffin's "Jesuit Drama: a Guide to the Literature," included in *I gesuiti e i primordi del teatro barocco in Europa*, a volume with the proceedings of the homonymous 1994 conference.<sup>20</sup>

As far as the story of Hermenegildo is concerned, the version that has been studied the most is *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, from 1590 Spain. All of the tragedies I investigate, with the exception of the one written by Sforza Pallavicino, received modern editions in the original language in which they were written.<sup>21</sup> However, the limitations of these editions are many. Sometimes they come without a strong critical introduction, or with no introduction at all; other times they are included in an anthology of an author's works, but then ignored as far as critical analysis is concerned, such as in the case of Sor Juana's *San Hermenegildo, el mártir del sacramento* and Lope de Vega's *La mayor corona*.

#### 1.4 NOTES FOR THE READER

Since this dissertation examines five tragedies written in three different countries and a variety of different sources written in multiple languages, it was vital to keep the spelling of proper names consistent in order to avoid misunderstanding and confusion in the reader. I adopted the Spanish

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<sup>20</sup> Maria Chiabó and Federico Doglio, ed., *I gesuiti e i primordi del teatro barocco in Europa: atti del convegno di studi* (Rome: Centro Studi sul Teatro Medievale e Rinascimentale), 1994.

<sup>21</sup> I read Pallavicino's tragedy in its 1852 edition: Sforza Pallavicino, *Il martire Ermenegildo* (Imola: Ignazio Galeati e Figli, 1852).

spelling for three main reasons: Spain was the first country in which the story of Hermenegildo emerged as a theatrical piece, it was the place where the original historical events took place and, finally, three out of the five tragedies I investigate were written in the Spanish language. The first underlined name represents the name choices I employ in my narrative, while the following versions account for the multiple variations the reader will encounter in citations and footnotes written in Spanish, Italian, French, and Latin.

Hermenegildo: Ermegildo, Ermenegildo, Hermenegildus, Hermenegild, Herménégilde

Leovigildo: Leovigild

Ingunda: Ingonda, Ingundis

Recaredo: Recared

Atanagildo: Athanagild

Goswintha: Gosvinta, Godswintha

Gregorio de Tours: Gregorio di Tours, Gregory of Tours

Juan de Bícclaro: John of Bicularum, Giovanni di Bicláro, Juan Biclarense

Gregorio Magno: Gregory the Great, Gregorium Magnum,

I did all the translations from Spanish, Italian, French, and Latin, unless otherwise specified in the text. Translations of ten words or less are embedded in the text. Those of more than ten words are given as a footnote.

## **2.0 THE JOURNEY OF HERMENEGILDO FROM HISTORICAL CHARACTER TO THEATRICAL PROTAGONIST**

### **2.1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE**

The scarcity of the documents about the life of the historical Hermenegildo is not the only problem facing the researcher. In fact, among the four chroniclers who wrote accounts of the Visigoth prince's life in the aftermath of his death, there are divergent opinions about crucial events such as his revolt against his father, his conversion to the Catholic faith, and his state-ordered execution. From the very start, the story of Hermenegildo becomes a battleground where opposing ideologies try to prove different agendas. The life and death of the prince grew to be a site where memorable facts were deliberately forgotten, and newly crafted ones were espoused and marketed for general consumption.

Because of this, it is essential to examine the historical Hermenegildo to understand fully the powerful operation initiated by the Jesuits in the aftermath of the Lutheran Reformation in constructing him as a theatrical trope embedded with strong religious and political agendas. Examining the data surrounding the life and death of Hermenegildo will provide the reader with the necessary background to follow the discussion about the tragedies inspired by him, as well as a factual foundation to determine how, and how much, the original story was changed to accommodate the perspectives of the Society of Jesus. The metamorphosis of the fictional material will be examined in the following chapters to discuss both the ideological mission of the

Society of Jesus, as well as the potential of the story itself to transcend its original message and come to embrace different values, geographical and cultural contexts, and minority groups.

However, the analysis of Hermenegildo as a historical character is not an easy task, as most of the contemporary documentary material about his life is limited to celebratory coins minted after military successes, and four primary sources written by Juan de Biclario, Saint Isidoro, Gregory of Tours, and Pope Gregory the Great.

Juan de Biclario, in his *Chronica*, and Saint Isidoro in both his *Historia Gothorum* and *Historia Suevorum*, mentioned only the political intent of Hermenegildo's rebellion and declined to discuss his conversion and the religious motivation of the civil war that ensued among the Visigoths. For both of them, Hermenegildo was a traitor who betrayed his father and tried to seize the power for personal and selfish reasons. What mattered to these historians was not why the heir to the throne decided to rebel but merely the fact that he did. As a consequence, Isidoro ignored Hermenegildo's death and Juan de Biclario simply described how it was the result of a murder but he did not mention who ordered it. Benedetto Cignitti blames these two medieval chroniclers for the historical mistake of failing to acknowledge the causes of Hermenegildo's death. In his opinion both Isidoro and Juan might have been worried about touching on such a painful historical moment because they were writing at a time when Leovigildo was already dead and Recaredo, Hermenegildo's brother, had converted to Catholicism. Cignitti claims also that the Vatican state might have been embarrassed to discuss a historical event that saw the Church supporting a civil war. He resorts to the same justification to explain why the anonymous author of the *Vitas sanctorum Patrum Emeretensium* deliberately altered the text written by Pope Gregory the Great in order to avoid talking about the conversion and death of Hermenegildo. The unknown author modified the passage in which the Pope explained how Recaredo followed his

martyr brother, not his evil father, so that the mention of Christ replaced Hermenegildo's name altogether.

[...] pur di non ricordare la conversione di Ermenegildo e il suo martirio, altera deliberatamente il testo di s. Gregorio Magno relativo alla conversione di Recaredo. Là dove il papa scriveva "non patrem perfidum, sed fratrem martirem sequens," egli ha cambiato così: "non patrem perfidum, sed Christum Dominum sequens." Sembra che il ricordo di Ermenegildo gli bruci le mani.<sup>22</sup>

Even if Cignitti is correct in his theory of a "congiura del silenzio sulla memoria di Ermenegildo da parte di numerosi rappresentanti della chiesa spagnola," he certainly does not produce enough evidence to support his statement.<sup>23</sup> In fact, he fails to mention that both Isidoro and Juan de Bícilaro accurately documented many other violent moments of Visigothic history in spite of their potentially embarrassing content for the monarchy and the papacy. It is unclear why the story of Hermenegildo should have been any different. Moreover, it is incomprehensible why the researcher should doubt the only two Spanish sources and accept accounts of the story written by Gregory of Tours, a Frank priest, and Gregory the Great, a Roman pope.

Gregory the Great proposed a diametrically opposed interpretation to those of Isidoro and Juan. He focused his narration of the Hermenegildo story almost exclusively on his conversion and martyrdom and privileged its most devotional aspects. In spite of the fact that he did not address in detail the political relevance of Hermenegildo's rebellion, Gregory considered it legitimate "since it was directed against an unjust and heretical father, and also, very possibly,

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<sup>22</sup> "In order to avoid mentioning the conversion of Hermenegildo and his martyrdom, he alters deliberately the text written by Gregory the Great about Recaredo's conversion. Where the Pope wrote 'he didn't follow his evil father, but instead his martyr brother', he said 'following not his evil father, but Christ the Lord.' It appears as if the memory of Hermenegildo is burning his hands." Benedetto Cignitti, "Ermenegildo, re, santo, martire," *Biblioteca Sanctorum* (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1964), 33.

<sup>23</sup> "...a conspiracy of silence around Hermenegild's memory, hatched by many members of the Spanish Church." Ibid., 33.



since it was supported by the authority of Byzantium.”<sup>24</sup> The Pope’s chronicle of the events propelled the readers immediately into the prison where Hermenegildo was kept for the profession of his faith. He illustrated how Hermenegildo was visited by an Arian priest wanting to administer to him the Holy Communion, how the captive proudly refused it, and then courageously met his death on Easter Sunday 585 A.D. Cignitti explains how Pope Gregory had access to first hand witnesses, such as Leandro, bishop of Seville, and a number of Spanish pilgrims, to keep him informed about the true circumstances of Hermenegildo’s demise, but the pontiff’s hagiographical and devotional intents emerge throughout his chronicle in spite of his claims of historical accuracy. It is quite evident that the Pope was interested mainly in highlighting the religious content of Hermenegildo’s rebellion and martyrdom, and not in documenting the event historically.<sup>25</sup> He emphasized the piousness and godliness of the prince in order to exemplify his behavior as worthy of imitation and, as a result, his chronicle successfully turned the story of Hermenegildo’s martyrdom into a quintessential example of devotional literature.<sup>26</sup>

Out of all the sources available, Gregory of Tours is the only one who proposed a more balanced and detailed account of the story, and, maybe because of this reason, his opinion was the one that consolidated itself through the centuries and came to be known as the most credible.

Gregory of Tours recounted the meddling and interference of Leovigildo’s wife Goswintha as

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<sup>24</sup> J. N. Hillgarth, *Visigothic Spain, Byzantium and the Irish* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), 486.

<sup>25</sup> “Es un conjunto de relatos sobre santos y milagros, escritos con la única intención de mover a devoción, y no tanto de hacer Historia: de ahí que le autor dé cabida a sucesos maravillosos. No se trata de una obra en que la cronología ordene y organice el relato; al contrario, está escrita con finalidad literaria, destinada a un público sencillo.” (“It is a mix of stories about saints and miracles, written with the scope of moving to devotion instead of recording history. It is for this reason that the author narrates miraculous events. Chronology does not order or structure the narration of this work because it has literary ambitions and is directed to simple people.”) Beatriz Marcotegui Barber, “El tratamiento historiográfico de San Hermenegildo,” *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia*, Vol. XII, 2003, 297.

<sup>26</sup> “Similarly, Gregory the Great’s image of Hermenegild as a martyr who gave his life for his faith is both controlled by the ideological purpose of the *Dialogues*, in which the story appears, and is a perspective from the period following the Visigothic prince’s somewhat mysterious death.” Roger Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409-711* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 57.

the beginning of the problems between Hermenegildo and his father. By doing so, he also clarified the words of Juan de Biclario who had reported in his own chronicle that the rebellion was due to a domestic fight instigated by Queen Goswintha, the former wife of Visigoth King Atanagildo and wife to Leovigildo.<sup>27</sup> The queen opposed the marriage of her stepson Hermenegildo to her own niece Ingunda, and tried many times to convince Ingunda to convert to the Arian doctrine. According to Gregory of Tours, Goswintha was so furious about having a Catholic person in her family that on one occasion she resorted to forcing Ingunda into a pool to have her baptized again. Her hatred for the Catholic faith ran deep because of what had happened to her own daughter after she married a Catholic. Following the matrimonial policies so common in that period, Gailswintha, one of queen Goswintha's daughters from her marriage to Atanagildo, was given as a bride to Catholic King Chilperico. Gailswintha converted to Catholicism to guarantee religious and political homogeneity, and Chilperico promised to renounce his many wives and concubines in return. However, instigated by his former mistress Fredegunda, the king ordered the assassination of Gailswintha.<sup>28</sup> The sorrow of losing one of her children caused Goswintha to develop a deep-seated distrust and hate for all Catholics.

While Goswintha's firm rejection of Catholicism was due to personal reasons, Leovigildo saw the potential political dangers of having a Catholic convert among his family. Since his brother Liuva had enlisted him as coregent in 568, and then had passed away around 573, Leovigildo had established himself as the only monarch of the Visigoths and, through a series of extensive military campaigns, he had gained sovereignty over most of Spain and brought a relative stability to the Visigoths. He was all too aware of the disastrous consequences of a possible military alliance between the Catholic Byzantines, who had never completely

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid, 56.

<sup>28</sup> José Orlandis, *Historia de España: Epoca visigoda 409-711* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1987), 91-92.

surrendered to him, and Hermenegildo's devotees. The situation was also complicated by the fact that the kingdom was still far from stable, and even though defeated and apparently inactive, the Sueves, the Franks, the Cantabros, and the Byzantines were still forces to be reckoned with.<sup>29</sup>

There were also domestic problems within the Visigoth state that had arisen when Leovigildo had become an absolute ruler, using for the first time in the history of Spain the regal signs of the monarch, such as throne, crown, diadem, and royal robes. His attempt to distinguish and separate himself from the nobles created such a climate of distrust and uneasiness in the relationship between the king and the aristocrats that Juan José Sayas Abegonchea and Luis García Moreno blame Hermenegildo's rebellion on Leovigildo's anti-aristocratic politics.<sup>30</sup> The unstable political situation of the Visigoth nation was also exacerbated by the lack of a unified religion, capable of creating a much needed cohesion among Leovigildo's subjects. The king had tried to build a state under the communal Arian doctrine, however his strategy proved to be a political mistake because the Catholics were numerous among the above-mentioned populations, and they were adamant about professing and maintaining their religiosity.<sup>31</sup> An alliance of Leovigildo's enemies under the Catholic aegis and direction of Hermenegildo would have proven difficult to overcome.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>30</sup> "Sería en esta política antinobiliaria, relacionada al mismo tiempo con el reforzamiento del poder real, donde podré estar el origen profundo y estructural de lo que constituyó la principal crisis de su reinado: la rebelión de su propio hijo Hermenegildo." ("This anti-nobility policy, accompanied by the reinforcement of the monarchical power, could be the deep and structural cause of the worst crisis of his reign: the rebellion of his own son Hermenegildo.") Juan José Sayas Abegonchea, Luis A. García Moreno, in Manuel Tuñón de Lara (ed.), *Historia de España. Romanismo y germanismo, el despertar de los pueblos hispánicos (siglos IV-X)* (Barcelona: Editorial Labor: 1986), 312-313.

<sup>31</sup> "The resolution of the religious conflict that divided the upper echelons of society in the kingdom was essential if a new sense of common identity and purpose was to emerge among the governing classes. Leovigild's mistake was to favor an imposed Arianism; Reccared's success lay in doing the same thing in support of Catholicism." Roger Collins, p. 61.

If we are to believe John of Biclarum's chronology of the rebellion, it is likely that at its outset Hermenegild declared himself a convert to Trinitarian Christianity. This was of considerable significance. It allowed Hermenegild to appeal, like Athanagild before him, for Byzantine support which he received albeit in a half-hearted fashion. Moreover, it created potential support for the rebellion among the majority Hispano-Roman population.<sup>32</sup>

Historians must rely on Gregory of Tours's chronicle and on the coins minted to celebrate Leovigildo's and Hermenegildo's victories to follow the first phases and the intricate developments of the civil war that started in 582. Gregory explains that Leovigildo, after having fought and defeated the Basque insurgents in northern Spain, attempted to find a peaceful solution to the political crisis by negotiating with his son and asking him for a meeting. Hermenegildo declined the offer to negotiate with his father, and entered instead into an allegiance with the Catholic Byzantines. Knowing it would have been impossible to win the war against Leovigildo's larger and better trained troops, Hermenegildo sent Leandro, bishop of Seville and his close friend, to Constantinople to plead for stronger military support, which he never received.<sup>33</sup> After threats and promises proved useless, Leovigildo waged war with his son and moved into the territories that had sworn loyalty to Hermenegildo. He captured the city of Merida, and later that same year he began the siege of Seville, where Hermenegildo had barricaded himself, possibly waiting for imperial reinforcements. Leovigildo blocked the Guadalquivir River to prevent the allied troops from reaching the city, as well as to stop all water supplies to the city. When Miro, the Catholic king of the Sueves, reached Seville to support Hermenegildo, Leovigildo managed to outsmart and subdue him, and forced him to promise his allegiance.<sup>34</sup> When Hermenegildo realized that there was no way in or out of the city, he called

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<sup>32</sup> A. T. Fear (ed. and trans.), *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997) xi.

<sup>33</sup> E. A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 66.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-76.

on the Byzantines for help, but his father won his allies over once again. This time Leovigildo bought the Byzantines' betrayal by paying them 30,000 solidi as a gift to withdraw their support to his son. Unaware of their betrayal and counting on his allies to fight by his side, Hermenegildo engaged his father in battle, but the Byzantines fled the battlefield leaving him outnumbered and ill-prepared to face Leovigildo's military forces. The king's tactic to isolate Seville from any outside reinforcements and weaken its population by cutting off food and water supplies worked to perfection. The city fell under his siege in 583.<sup>35</sup> Hermenegildo, who had managed to escape before the city was taken, tried to secure his family's safety by sending Ingunda and his young son Atanagildo to Constantinople. According to Gregory of Tours, Ingunda died during the journey while Atanagildo managed to successfully reach his destination. Hermenegildo fled to Cordoba and took refuge in a church. Here, according to Gregory of Tours, Recaredo convinced him to surrender to his father in exchange for pardon. Hermenegildo surrendered to Leovigildo, was taken to a prison in Valencia, transferred to another prison in Terragona, and was beheaded.

Some scholars cast doubt on Hermenegildo's selfless fight for Catholicism, the very reason why Roman sources interpreted Hermenegildo's death as martyrdom. For instance, Roger Collins finds incongruities between the date of 579, when the revolt officially started, and the relatively peaceful relationship between Arians and Catholics in that same period. According to Collins, it was only in 580 with the Toledo Council that religious freedom became a real issue and Leovigildo started to force Arianism on the Visigoths as the state national doctrine. However, it was in 579 that Hermenegildo rebelled against his father, during a time when religious tension was not yet a problem. The author suggests that Hermenegildo's conversion

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<sup>35</sup> As for many of the events of the war, the dates are disputable and there is no general agreement among the scholars. Pidal maintains that Seville fell in 584. See Ramon Menendez Pidal, *Historia de España. España Visigoda* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1940), 105.

might have happened after his rebellion and possibly for the practical reasons of finding allies to fight his father.

There are some grounds, from the logic of the various narratives of these events, for suspecting that his personal conversion from Arianism to Catholicism took place sometime after the beginning of the revolt in 579, possibly even as late as 582.<sup>36</sup>

If religious devotion was not the reason for the rebellion and Hermenegildo was instead trying to dethrone Leovigildo, the narrative of the story changes dramatically and all of its power of conviction as a devotional and theological tool is lost. If Hermenegildo converted to the doctrine of Rome as a way to justify his self-aggrandizing plans, his death would be the execution of a traitor, not the martyrdom of a Christian hero. In spite of scholarly attempts to understand the motives behind the rebellion that shook the Visigothic state in the late 500s, historians can establish a more or less accurate chronology of the events but no undisputable proof of its causations. The devotional and sanctifying narrative of the life and death of Hermenegildo is based on Gregorio de Tours' and Pope Gregorio Magnum's accounts, and in both cases the documentary value of their work should be questioned. The most problematic and suspicious data for the historians to interpret are the ones surrounding Hermenegildo's death. There is no source documenting why the prince was moved from Valencia to Terragona for the execution of his death sentence, no information about the identity of Sigisbert, his executioner, and only allusions to the fact that Recaredo might have been involved in the plot to kill his brother, as Luis Garcia Moreno suspects.<sup>37</sup> The fragmentary documentation about

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<sup>36</sup> Roger Collins, pp. 57, 58. See also Roger Collins, "Mérida and Toledo: 550-585," in Edward James (ed.), *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 217.

<sup>37</sup> Luis Garcia Moreno, "La coyuntura política del III Concilio de Toledo. Una historia larga y tortuosa," in R. González (ed.), *El Concilio III de Toledo. XIV Centenario 589-1989* (Toledo, 1991), pp 271-296, cited in R. Collins, 59, n63.

Hermenegildo's rebellion, and the civil war that ensued as its consequence, is a reflection of the chroniclers' struggle to document an event that was charged with political and religious implications, as well as the conscious attempt to silence or underscore only certain facts. Like all other cultural activities, the act of writing history in medieval Spain reflected specific ideological positions and mirrored the crucial and problematic relationship and coexistence of political and religious discourses. While the Church had been supportive of the royal power, the stability of the crown depended on maintaining a healthy relationship with the Vatican, which had never released its solid control over the spiritual life of the Catholics, nor had renounced its political designs. It was on the subtle balance between these two mighty powers that great and long lasting nations were to be erected. The monarch and the Pope strove to achieve this balance sometimes militarily, other times rhetorically. The civil war that ensued among the Visigoths retained both qualities. Leovigildo used Arianism as a strategy of polarization to respond to Hermenegildo, whose rebellion had created consensus under the Trinitarian cause.<sup>38</sup> Hermenegildo's reasons to rebel must be evaluated using the specular perspectives of politics and religion. The dialectical positioning of political and theological ideologies is quite evident in the analysis of the coins issued by Leovigildo and Hermenegildo between 582 and 585. The use of the word God on the coins minted during the war years was employed ostensibly by both parties to reaffirm that God blessed their victory of a specific battle, but in reality it was a purely

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<sup>38</sup>“Es indudable que con tales medidas Leovigildo perseguía la unidad religiosa de todos sus súbditos. El perseguir tal unidad mediante el arrianismo, muy posiblemente se debía a razones tanto de orden coyuntural como estructural. En primer lugar, la adopción por el rebelde Hermenegildo de la fe católica como factor diferenciador obligaba a Leovigildo a forzar en torno a él la unidad de los arrianos como punto de partida.” (“It is undoubtable that by using these instruments Leovigildo intended to achieve religious unity. Reaching such unity with Arianism was due both to conjectural and structural reasons. Firstly, Hermenegildo's adoption of the Catholic faith as a differentiating factor forced Leovigildo to push the unity of all Arians as a point of departure.”) Juan José Sayas Abegonchea, Luis A. García Moreno, 317.

rhetorical means aimed at securing an ideological platform for popular consensus.<sup>39</sup> Those coins and their messages mirror more modern formulaic expressions such as “In God We trust,” “God bless America,” “God bless our troops,” printed on bumper stickers as a way to remind, or persuade, the readers that military triumph equals righteousness. The Visigoths, both Arians and Catholics, knew well that the ownership of divine support, even if only as a self-asserted statement, could make the difference between winning or losing a war when it managed to capture popular imaginary and support. Winning the war would have been hailed by both factions as the unequivocal indication that God had granted his divine support of their cause.

In spite of the many opposing arguments and numerous lacunae in the data about Hermenegildo’s insurgence, the factual evidence tells us that there was a military conflict between Hermenegildo and Leovigildo; that Hermenegildo converted at one point to Catholicism; that Leovigildo captured him and put him in prison; that a soldier named Sigisbert eventually murdered him; that a few years after his death his brother Recaredo converted to Catholicism, and that this decision turned Spain for the first time into a Catholic nation. The present research does not concern itself with the historical accuracy of the facts leading to Hermenegildo’s rebellion but instead with how five dramatic works, three written by Jesuit priests, one by a professional playwright, and one by a nun, interpreted those facts one thousand years after the events took place. The main focus will be on how and why Hermenegildo became a cultural hero in the plays staged by the Society of Jesus in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and how he acquired visibility and notoriety outside of the Jesuit colleges. While it is immediately evident how there is ample ground for theatrically exploiting this story, with its depiction of attempted parricide, seditious rebellion, gruesome

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<sup>39</sup> For a detailed analysis of this important issue, check J. N. Hillgarth, “Coins and Chronicles: Propaganda in Sixth-Century Spain and the Byzantine Background,” in *Visigothic Spain, Byzantium and the Irish*, 483-509.



murder, and unswerving faith, it is the task of this dissertation to investigate the proliferation and exponential multiplication of plays about Hermenegildo in places as removed from each other as Spain, Italy, France, Germany, and Mexico. As any work of art is, to some extent, a co-construction in which the author's voice is directly informed by the culture of the time, by the economic and political structures of the country where he or she operates, by artistic and ideological influences of which he or she might or might not be conscious, and by inherent expectations of the readership/spectatorship for which he or she writes, the following pages will discuss the reasons why this story exerted such a deep fascination on Jesuits and non-Jesuit dramatists. The main focus, therefore, is on the rhetorical potential of this story in both its political and theological applications. As this dissertation illustrates, Hermenegildo's martyrdom was relevant to the post-Tridentine Church and the Society of Jesus because it reactivated the narrative of the crucifixion, embodied the very core of the Jesuit college curricula, supported the theological underpinnings of the Counter Reformation, embraced missionary work, and finally addressed regicide and resolved the problematic issue of absolute devotion to the Church versus respect for the temporal power of the monarch.

While all five dramatic works discussed in this dissertation espouse these ideological tenets, they do so to different degrees and through a variety of distinctive dramaturgical strategies. Not only did the dramatists modify the basic storyline of the Hermenegildo story to suit their theological and rhetorical goals, they also adjusted it according to the type of spectatorship attending their plays. Françoise Maurizi explains that the hagiographical theatre of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries maintained a subtle balance "entre historia y literatura, por supuesto, y a veces entre historia y pura invención" and took into consideration

the target audience, the location, and the type of celebration or festivity as pivotal variables in the crafting and staging a play:

El enunciado teatral, en efecto, cambia según el destinatario y las circunstancias de enunciación determinan, como se sabe, el contenido, no siendo lo mismo, por ejemplo, tratar de provocar la devoción de un público heterogéneo en un espacio abierto, como en la Fiestas de Corpus Christi o bien conmemorar, en un espacio cerrado, aulico y a pedido de mecenas, las fiestas más importantes del calendario litúrgico.<sup>40</sup>

## 2.2 HERMENEGILDO AND THE JESUIT COLLEGE THEATRE

The theatre that developed in the Jesuit colleges after the foundation of the order became almost immediately a phenomenon of huge proportions, spreading across the world with incredible rapidity and playing to countless spectators globally. Jonathan Levy believes that “one hundred thousand plays were performed in over five hundred school theatres, first in Europe and, with the spread of the Counter-Reformation, in most of the known world” from the foundation of the Society of Jesus until its suppression in 1773.<sup>41</sup> This theatre exhibited different characteristics from the devotional theatre staged by other religious orders, because it uniquely mixed the sophisticated staging of secular theatre with the devotional message of religious stories from the Bible and the lives of saints and martyrs. Not only did the Jesuits use “the familiar equipment of

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<sup>40</sup> “...between history and literature, of course, and sometimes between history and invention.” “The theatrical enunciation changes according to the receiver and the circumstances of the enunciation determine its content, because it is not the same thing to try to enhance the devotion of a heterogeneous public in an open space such as the Feast of Corpus Christi, and celebrate the most important festivities of the liturgical calendar in an enclosed space, stately and requested by a patron.” Françoise Maurizi, “La representación de lo santo en el teatro,” in *Homenaje a Henri Guerreiro: la hagiografía entre historia y literatura en la España de la Edad Media y del Siglo de Oro*, ed. Mark Vitse (Navarra: Editorial Iberoamericana, 2005), 848.

<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Levy, “Theatre and Moral Education,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Autumn, 1997), 65.

the Baroque theatre, with its trap doors and flying machines, its lightning and thunder,” they successfully experimented with perspective painting, stagecraft, theatre architecture, and lighting design: Jesuits Jean Dubreil (*La Perspective Pratique*) and Andrea Pozzo (*Perspectiva pictorum atque architectorum*) worked on perspective scenery, while Athanasius Kircher, Gaspar Schott, and Claude Francois Milliet de Châles all contributed in different ways to the study and invention of lighting instruments.<sup>42</sup> Thanks to their use of theatrical devices and religious dramas, Jesuits theatre practitioners aimed at impacting the audience in an emotional and long lasting manner.

Staging religious dramas within the college was also a way for the Jesuits to compete with contemporary profane theatre by providing a more acceptable type of diversion. The Society especially opposed the *commedia dell’arte* troupes which attracted crowds of people fascinated by the highly physical comedy, the vivaciousness of the stories, and ultimately by the presence of actresses on stage.<sup>43</sup> The issue of promoting a theatre that could appeal to large audiences and entertain them with educationally enlightening stories was pivotal to the pedagogical methodologies of the order, which encouraged socialization and communication as foundational base for effective instruction.<sup>44</sup> As the ultimate goal of the Jesuits was that of teaching ‘passions’ (passion for Bible stories, the Church doctrines, the fighting against the heretics, etc.), theatre provided them with the tool to ground those passions situationally in the world of the play, as well as to workshop and observe their social relevance and applicability.

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<sup>42</sup> Henry Schnitzler, “The Jesuit Contribution to the Theatre,” *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Dec., 1952), 287, 289-292.

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed account of the Jesuit reaction to the professional theatre of the *commedia dell’arte*, see Ferdinando Taviani, *La fascinazione del teatro. La Commedia dell’Arte e la società barocca* (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1991).

<sup>44</sup> “Jesuits understood that the arena in which souls move is most immediately social. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Jesuits saw the social arena as uniquely susceptible to human control –an arena of indeterminacy subject to the forces of a well-written treatise, a well-spoken sermon, or a well-designed pedagogy ... the social realm was at the same time viewed by the Jesuits as a political battleground.” Daniel Gross, “Caussin’s Passion and the New History of Rhetoric,” *Rhetorica*, Vol. XXI, No 2 (Spring 2003), 108. (89-112)

The students were also supposed to learn these passions not simply through their imitation of the play actions, but through their emotional experience of these actions. Daniel Gross clarifies the rhetorical use of passions in the pedagogical and theatrical practises of the Society of Jesus and their connection to vivid and engaging images: “To be learned, passions would have to be properly staged –for example in the form of a tragedy designed to teach the passions that sustain the Christian soul.”<sup>45</sup>

The Jesuits intended to appeal to the audience, whether it was made of students in a classroom or hundreds of people in a theatre. In order to achieve this goal, they realized that engaging the intellect was not enough to guarantee a long lasting result that would impress indelibly on the memory of the students and the spectators.<sup>46</sup> Instead, they relied on imagination and creativity as valuable resources to provoke emotions and a consequent call for action.

The Jesuit knew well the subtle communicative and imagining strategies that theatre shared with the religious training devised by Saint Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*. In his book, the founder of the order encouraged the novices to exploit fully the power of creativity and imagination to reach a higher communication with the divine. The students used his ‘imagining’ methodologies from their first year in college and considered them an integral part of their spiritual growth.<sup>47</sup> Memory was more than simply recalling facts the student had experienced

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>46</sup> “...il ricorso alla teatralità può essere interpretato come il riconoscimento di un luogo simbolico in cui si raccoglie l’unità del soggetto ed in cui la reinvenzione fantastica, attivando memoria, immaginazione, affetti ed intelligenza, educa a guardare e giudicare la realtà in modo ordinato, consapevole, orientato.” (“...the use of theatricality can be seen as the acknowledgement of a symbolical place embodying the unity of the subject, and in which the fantastic invention teaches how to look and judge reality in a orderly, aware, and oriented manner due to the activation of memory, imagination, affections, and intelligence.”) Giovanna Zanlonghi, “La psicologia e il teatro nella riflessione gesuitica europea del Cinque-Seicento,” *Memorandum*, 4, (Abril, 2003), 62. (61-85)

<sup>47</sup> Federico Taviani recently challenged the widely accepted connection between Jesuit theatre and the *Spiritual Exercises* in “Il teatro per i Gesuiti: una questione di metodo,” in *Alle Origini dell’Università dell’Aquila. Cultura, Università, Collegi Gesuitici all’Inizio della Età Moderna in Italia Meridionale* (Atti del convegno internazionale di studi promosso dall’Compagnia di Gesù e dall’Università dell’Aquila nel IV centenario dell’Istituzione dell’*Aquilanum Collegium* (1596), edited by Filippo Iappelli and Ulderico Parente (Rome: Grafiche del Liri, 2000).

personally in his life. It was a vehicle to access and master God's will for mankind, which "was communicated through reenacting, through making live in one's own experience, those mysterious memory symbols that spoke of salvation, of the cosmos, and of human history."<sup>48</sup> Memory is then creation out of nothing, an act of manufacturing images that transcend the world of the student and facilitated by God's grace. Antonio De Nicolas describes such practice of memory as capable of breaking the imperfect boundaries of human epistemology. Memory becomes a force able to reestablish the original unity between God and men by restoring a way of knowing that rejects human fragmentation and multiplicity.

Historically and originally both grounds of knowing are in opposition: their first historical reconciliation is through the death of Christ at the Cross. The second historical reconciliation is through the way of the mystics and the technologies they devised for the passage from knowing through cognitive skills and ideologies that humans invented, to knowing which is identical with or close to the original act of creation. The mystic's sense of humility is more than a virtue. It is a systematic condition needed to embody certain technologies, languages, and habits of reading, sensing, feeling, and acting that will make the act of creation, the new birth, possible.<sup>49</sup>

The creation of a 'new man' through the use of embodied techniques geared at enhancing the natural and physical perceptions of the practitioner can be related to the training of many modern acting schools. The Jesuits' process of training the body and the mind to 'create out of nothing' a memory of something or somebody that has not been experienced, appears to be very close to the modern actor's goal to know and understand a character inside out in order to play him truthfully on stage. Ignatius's imagining techniques are strikingly similar to Konstantin

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<sup>48</sup> Patrick Heelan, Forward to Antonio T. De Nicolas, *Powers of Imaging* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), xiii.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 35

Stanislavsky's acting training.<sup>50</sup> Just like a trained actor using the 'magic if' can forge memories of a fictional character to help him justify his actions in the play, so the Jesuit priest who had practiced the spiritual exercises could access an unadulterated knowledge of God's will: "A new language is given the retreatant, a new memory and a new imagination. Through this retraining, a new will might emerge in harmony with the will of God."<sup>51</sup>

Like actors who are encouraged by their directors or instructors to use their body and senses to experience the physical and emotional reality of both the character and play they are rehearsing, the Jesuits placed great importance on the active stimulation of all five senses. The sensory training was intended to bring to life the memory of the event the student of the *Spiritual Exercises* was trying to relive. The body became a site of the physical and emotional manifestation of such memories and, consequently, it was to be trained, disciplined, and restrained. The senses were the instruments used to elicit the formation/creation of new memories of historical and biblical episodes, as well as the medium through which any memory could be retained in the brain permanently. The fifth exercise of the first week of retreat was a meditation on hell, and for this task the student was asked to create a memory of hell through the use of all senses. Before starting the exercise, he had to recite a preparatory prayer, a first prelude where he would imagine hell in its "length, breadth, and depth," and a second prelude where he would ask for "an interior sense of the pain suffered by the damned." After this preparation, the student would meditate on five points:

*The First Point* will be to see with the eyes of the imagination the huge fires and, so to speak, the souls within the bodies full of fire.

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<sup>50</sup> Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, trans. By Elisabeth Reynolds Hapgood (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1978), 51-67.

<sup>51</sup> Patrick Heelan, 37

*The Second Point.* In my imagination I will hear the wailing, the shrieking, the cries, and the blasphemies against our Lord and all his saints.

*The Third Point.* By my sense of smell I will perceive the smoke, the sulphur, the filth, and the rotting things.

*The Fourth Point.* By my sense of taste I will experience the bitter flavors of hell: tears, sadness, and the worm of conscience.

*The Fifth Point.* By my sense of touch, I will feel how the flames touch the souls and burn them.<sup>52</sup>

Each of these points was to be the object of the student's meditation until it became a permanent image, a memory that could have been retrieved when needed to help the student in his spiritual path. After completing the exercises, the student would begin a 'colloquy' with Jesus as a strategy to consolidate the meaning and images which surfaced through the exercise. In this section, he would address the reasons why people were in hell and thank Christ for his benevolence in keeping him alive and for his mercy. The whole exercise was then sealed by the "Our Father." Out of all the natural senses, the one that guaranteed the most long lasting results was vision, and this explains the incredible efforts the Society of Jesus made in the development of figurative arts. The primacy of vision also inspired much of the Jesuits' work as educators, and preachers.

The traditional belief that through the strongest sense organ, the eye, images have a deeper and longer-lasting effect on the memory than words was one of the pillars of Jesuit spirituality and the artistic expression of the Baroque era that are more or less rightly associated with it.<sup>53</sup>

The Jesuits were interested in different forms of communication and artistic idioms that could bring to life the material covered in class or in church. The arts were naturally their first

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<sup>52</sup> George E. Ganss, trans., *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1992), 46-47.

<sup>53</sup> Katel Potterman "the Use of the Visual in Classical Jesuit Teaching and Education," *Paedagogica Historica*, 36: 1, 183 (179-196)

choice because they guaranteed the chance to engross observers, readers and spectators in the contemplation of an artifact, whose specific scope was that of being looked at, studied, pondered, or simply enjoyed by an observer. The Society of Jesus experimented with all performing arts and excelled in ballet, music, and opera.<sup>54</sup> However, theatre was the vehicle that gave them the possibility to apply all five senses, while guaranteeing them the strongest educational value for their students and audiences. In the attempt to elicit the profoundest emotional reactions, the Jesuits paid particular attention to all the theatrical devices utilized on the secular stages of Europe: spectacular special effects; elaborate costumes; surprising moments such as apparitions, visions, dream sequences; terrifying scenes such as visions of hell, Satan, devils, and ghosts; and rapid scene changes accomplished through innovative scenic machines. Henry Schnitzler highlights the primacy of the sensory engagement brought about by a Jesuit representation, and its religious finality:

A Jesuit performance was to be an irresistible appeal to senses and emotions rather than to intellect and reason. The spectator was to be virtually hypnotized by a concerted attack of all known theatrical devices, until he surrendered his entire being to the drama's spiritual message."<sup>55</sup>

What really moved and surprised the public was the spectacle associated with Jesuitical theatre. Lavish productions crammed with spectacular effects were common in the colleges of the Society of Jesus. This interest for outlandish scenery, sumptuous costumes and expensive stage machinery appeared especially during the *intermezzi* in between acts. It is reported that in Manila the Jesuits organized celebrations that included theatre and lasted for nine days.<sup>56</sup> In 1574, they

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<sup>54</sup> See Judith Rock, *Terpsichore at Louis-le-Grand: Baroque Dance on the Jesuit Stage in Paris* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Studies, 1996.)

<sup>55</sup> Henry Schnitzler, 285, (283-292)

<sup>56</sup> See O'Malley, et al., 662.



staged in Munich *Constantine* during a two-day event that involved one thousand people. Moreover, the Jesuits would use music and dance, and hired choruses of *castrati*, male sopranos, to sing during official celebrations.<sup>57</sup> As a medium of communication, theatre was a valid tool to ‘discuss’ the issue that mattered most to the Society of Jesus. Working as “a multi-media event, tailored to the eye as well as to the ear,” it exposed the audience to a complete sensory experience that no other art form could provide.<sup>58</sup> Despite the fact that a few Jesuits thought theatre was an unworthy instrument for the discussion of religious topics, the Society of Jesus kept on using it in its colleges as an educative tool because it acknowledged its power to positively influence the audience and vividly bring to life important stories from the Bible and the lives of saints and martyrs.<sup>59</sup> The formulaic content of these plays included the promotion among the spectators of a devout conduct and religious devotion, and the cultivation of moral restraints towards the many temptations available in the modern world. After asking himself the reason why theatre was necessary to the Society of Jesus and how long it should be used, Jesuit Luis Cruz of Portugal answered his own question by saying “as long as it will help to expel wickedness, increase piety, inflame a love of virtue, and afford becoming amusement.”<sup>60</sup>

Jesuit theatre aimed at engaging both the students/actors and the congregation/audience in the spiritual message of the play through the staging of highly moving stories charged with affecting theological and human lessons. This practice worked as well in Europe as it did in the

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<sup>57</sup> Mitchell, 134.

<sup>58</sup> Katel Potterman, 179.

<sup>59</sup> A list of Jesuits who opposed the theatre and a brief discussions of their arguments can be found in Jesús Menéndez Peláez, *Los Jesuitas y el Teatro en el Siglo de Oro* (Oviedo:Universidad de Oviedo Servicios de Publicaciones, 1995), 99-133.

<sup>60</sup> Farrel, *The Jesuit Code of Liberal Education: Development and Scope of the Ratio Studiorum* (Milwaukee, 1938), 123. See also L. Mittner, *Storia della letteratura tedesca: Dai primordi pagani all’età barocca*, Vol. I, (Torino: Einaudi, 1977), 745. Mittner talks about a performance of the *Cenodoxus* by Bidermann that ended with a massive adhesion of the public to the Society of Jesus.

colonial world, where it was instrumental in the conversion of the natives.<sup>61</sup> However, unlike secular theatre whose finality stopped in most cases at pleasing the audience, Jesuit theatre had a more intellectually robust agenda as it also accounted for the rhetorical skills the students would learn through performing on a stage, as well as the relevance of that experience in their future lives.

Las frecuentes representaciones realizadas por los alumnos tenían dos claros objetivos. Por una parte, se trataba de formar a los jóvenes actores que, declamando textos escritos, básicamente, en latín, aunque con mezcla cada vez más frecuente de castellano, y siempre impregnados de fuerte contenido religioso y moral, aprendían a desenvolverse públicamente y se preparaban para actuar en una sociedad en la que la ceremonia y la apariencia jugaban tan importante papel. Pero también, y es el aspecto que aquí me interesa señalar, estas actuaciones teatrales alcanzaban una significativa repercusión social en la medida que servían de bocina amplificadora de las ideas jesuíticas y contribuían al aumento del número de adeptos y benefactores de su causa.<sup>62</sup>

Although the Jesuits experimented with all dramatic genres, tragedy was the one they used more often and successfully to support and sustain the teaching of the classes of oratory, eloquence, and rhetoric.<sup>63</sup> In the hands of the choragus, usually the teacher of the class of rhetoric in the college, the tragic form became a sizeable and quite convenient container for insightful theological and didactic lessons the professors wanted to fix permanently in the

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<sup>61</sup> Henry Schnitzler, 185.

<sup>62</sup> “The frequent plays presented by the students had two clear objectives. On one hand, they meant to educate the young actors who, by declaiming texts with a religious and moral content and written in Latin and sometimes in Spanish, learned to act in public and prepare themselves to act in a society where ceremony and appearance played such an important role. On the other hand, and this is the point I want to emphasize, those theatre representations entailed a significant social repercussion in that they amplified the Jesuits’ ideas and increase the number of both their followers and benefactors.” Francisco J. Cornejo, “Jesuitas y cultura clásica: un ‘triumfo’ en honor de Felipe II a su llegada en 1570.” *Criticón*, No. 92, 2004, 100.

<sup>63</sup> “Pure comedy found a place in the Jesuit repertoire in its later development. From the first, however, particularly in Spain, Portugal, and Germany, the intermingling of comedy and other forms of drama was normal, often for the sake of fun and relief, but generally also with didactic intention. The later French Jesuits developed a school of comedy that was directly instructive in its ridicule of foibles and vices, aimed not only at students and spectators, but sometimes at more tempting targets beyond these.” William H. McCabe, *An Introduction to the Jesuit Theater*, ed. Louis Soldani (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1983), 23.

memory of their students. As the main performance happened at the end of the semester, during the assignation of the prizes to the best students and in the presence of parents, faculty, members of the clergy and local aristocracy, the choragus dedicated a long time to rehearsing the piece and making sure everything would work properly. The individual investment of the student in the success of the performance must have been deep as well, as it was a way to demonstrate his progress to his family and his faculty. The actor was both a subject and an object of the stage representation. He alternated his role as character in a play with that of a student who had to be critiqued on his performance/exam. After practicing with in-class *actions*, such as recitation of poems, declamation of orations, and dialectic disputations, the student was ready for a performance in front of a public. His success was measured according to his ability to master the rhetorical skills taught in class but also by the effect of his capacity to emotionally touch the spectators, which is to persuade them. The success of a performance, however, surpassed the immediate goals of receiving a good grade, acquiring rhetorical and oratorical skills, and touching an audience. Acting in a religious tragedy or in an *auto sacramental* was a practical way for the student to emotionally experience the mystic rapture of the Christian hero and partake in the unfolding of his spiritual destiny. The connection between acting and mysticism, as Saint Ignatius understood it, had been present in the Catholic tradition since the third century A.D. with the figure of Saint Genesius, the protector saint of actors. Genesius was an actor who had made his name performing in comic skits that poked fun at the Christians. The legend says that during a performance in front of the Emperor Diocletian, famous for his persecutions of Christians, Genesius had a vision of his sins, repented his past life, converted to Christianity, and asked to be baptized on stage, at the exact moment that his character was about to receive baptism in the play. In what must have been a confusing metatheatrical event, Genesius was

baptized and immediately started to preach his new faith to the emperor who ordered him to be taken to the prefect. Eventually Genesius was sentenced to death by decapitation. This story illustrates the powerful force the Jesuits perceived in theatrical performances. The stage becomes to them a miraculous site where the identity of the actor merged with that of the character, where fictional martyrdoms foreshadowed real ones, and where the student turned into an iconic symbol of the victory of good over evil. Whether the spiritual transformation of the students was achieved or not, or whether it is even a testable thing, is open to discussion. What is indisputable, however, is the fact that the Society of Jesus fully exploited the theatrical medium to impact both the reality of the audience as well as that of the performers.

Theatre also gave the Jesuits the chance to discuss history and interpret it in a way that would reflect positively on the Church. In his 1583 *Bibliotheca selecta*, Antonio Possevino, who had taken on the task of creating the perfect bibliography for the Jesuit colleges, talked about the dangers of a heretical history and the necessity to counterbalance with a historical practice that would show the permanence of God in human affairs. Possevino was concerned with the preparedness of the Christians in fighting the anti-Catholic feelings circulating in the political discourses of the time. He believed history, both ancient and recent, could function as an inexhaustible repertoire of devotional narratives providing priests with the metaphorical and exemplifying cases they needed to fight intellectually both the anti-papists and Protestants.<sup>64</sup>

The tragedies inspired by the story of Hermenegildo fulfill the same militant goal in that they explore a forgotten moment of Spanish history characterized by murky details and opposing interpretations, and they reinvent it as a didactic piece illustrating theological and spiritual lessons. Why was saint Hermenegildo relevant to the didactic goals of the Society of Jesus? And

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<sup>64</sup> See Gian Paolo Brizzi, *La Ratio studiorum: modelli culturali e pratiche educative dei Gesuiti in Italia tra Cinque e Seicento* (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 1981), 54.

how did his story manage to engross the spectators and emotionally move them? Saint Hermenegildo was intrinsically didactic because it was based on the dialectical opposition of characters: the hero of the story is in direct conflict with his father, Saint Leandro opposes the Arian bishop, and Ingonda clashes with Gosvinta. Each of these oppositions carried the potential for showcasing the talent of the students in the *disputatio*, the skillful ability to win an argument during a public debate. In fact, all the Hermenegildo plays use one or more *disputatio* to illustrate the moral superiority of the Christian doctrine. These moments were pivotal because they established the veracity of the theological lesson being discussed, reaffirmed the political and propagandistic goal of the Society of Jesus, and finally, gave the students the chance to practice in front of an audience the skills they had learned in the classroom. In the 1590 *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, which I will discuss in chapter 3, the opposing views of Saint Leandro and Arian Bishop Paschasio were ‘staged’ during a public debate witnessed by the entire court. The centrality of this scene that occupies almost the entirety of act II highlighted the importance of the debate for the structure and dramaturgical purpose of the play. In a setting that reminded the spectators of a formal duel, the two giants sat face to face and took turns in attacking each other’s views on the nature of Christ as the second person of the Trinity. Winning the debate was as important for Leandro as it was for Paschasio because their success will persuade the audience of the validity of their ideas. The stakes were high also for the students/actors who were competing for a grade, as well as acting as representatives of the endless battle between good and evil. Even though the student playing Paschasio could not win the debate for obvious reasons, he had the potential to learn much by making a solid, if wrong, argument, grounded in the rich history of the Arianistic heresy and the Nicea Council. As the tragedies of Hermenegildo drew liberally on a variety of figures of speech, such as metaphors, antinomies, hyperboles, antithesis,

hyperbatons, paronomasias, synecdoche, and chiasmus, the students got the chance to practice the powerful tools of rhetoric and the sophisticated and formal eloquence required by their future positions as leading intellectuals and spiritual guides.

Saint Hermenegildo also reaffirmed the academic tone and didactic objectives of the Jesuit *teatro de colegio* by granting the students the unique opportunity to practice declamation and demonstrate their progresses in the enunciation, voice articulation and delivery, and gesture and posture:

The art of declamation was a prime preoccupation in the schools. An early document addressed to Jesuit masters insists on their duty to train in proper enunciation and inflection. Jouvancy's manual on learning and teaching, which was used by masters throughout the Society's system of schools, has a section on the art of voice production and gesture, in which he deals with the various methods of delivery ... In addition, the Jesuit teacher worked eagerly for grace of gesture and carriage, ease and distinction of manners.<sup>65</sup>

The students also had to work hard on the memorization and speaking of Latin, the idiom recommended by the *Ratio studiorum* for all plays staged in the Jesuit colleges. The Society of Jesus never enforced this rule because most of the people of the audience did not understand it, however it is undeniable that Latin was still the language of theology and intellectual debates of the time. While there is a considerable number of tragedies about Hermenegildo written completely in Latin, some others only contains one or two Latin sections, like the above-mentioned *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, to offer the students at least a few possibilities to practice the idiom that more than any other represented the exclusive and authoritative power of knowledge.

The story of Hermenegildo was also relevant to the Society of Jesus because of its capacity to engage and entertain the audience. It was a functional and constructive vehicle to

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<sup>65</sup> McCabe, 20.

stimulate the visual pleasure of the audience and emotionally draw them into the devotional matter of the story. The play, set at the court of Hermenegildo, features characters dressed in sumptuous costumes and elaborate attires suggesting their social status and dignity. The stage setting, although far from being realistic, would have been rich enough to describe the nobility of the locales. However, the most visually stunning moment in the play would have been the finale, when Hermenegildo appears in his prisoner clothes right before his execution. The misery of the soon-to-be-martyr and saint would have been juxtaposed with the grand splendor of the following scene. As music played, stage machines lifted Hermenegildo to the upper section of the stage, and all the characters looked up. The drastic scene change leading to Hermenegildo's ascent to heaven would have marveled the audience and brought them to tears.

### **2.3 HERMENEGILDO AND THE FIGHT AGAINST THE HERETIC LUTHERANS**

In 1981, Nicolas Shumway addressed the claims advanced by Sister M. Francis McGarry that Calderón de la Barca's *autos sacramentales* became more direct in their defense of the Eucharist consubstantiation when this sacrament came under attack by the Protestant Reformation, and he took on the task of investigating the presence of anti-protestant ideas in the theatrical output of Spain's most prolific author.<sup>66</sup> Though he did not claim an increase in the Eucharistic character of Calderón's plays due to the growth of Reformation movement, he recognized that "refuting Protestantism was certainly one of Calderón's purposes."<sup>67</sup> Shumway

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<sup>66</sup> See M. Francis McGarry, *The Allegorical and Metaphorical Language in the Autos Sacramentales of Calderón*. (Washington D.C., 1937).

<sup>67</sup> Nicolas Shumway, "Calderón and the Protestant Reformation: A View from the Autos Sacramentales," *Hispanic Review*, Vol. 49, No. 3. (Summer, 1981), 330 (329-348)

commented on key passages of Calderón's plays to show how the playwright deconstructed and refuted Lutheran arguments about the Eucharist, the issues of free will and predestination, sacerdotalism, and Luther's motto *Sola Scriptura*, which viewed the Bible as the only authoritative source of spiritual guidance. Being a former student at the Jesuit Colegio Imperial in Madrid, Calderón was familiar with the potential theatre had to influence both the political and religious debates of the time.

The relationship between the Jesuits and Protestantism is still a topic of great relevance for the historian studying the theatrical output of this religious order. After the Council of Trent, the Society of Jesus embraced the fight against Protestantism vigorously and the Vatican elected it to promote cultural and intellectual debates about Catholic orthodoxy, to rebuff and contain the accusations of corruption in relation to the Catholic acceptance of the indulgences, and to disprove and discredit the Protestant heterodox claims. The Jesuits' essential purpose was to eradicate heretical doctrine and "to take the battle directly to the Protestant enemy, to win back souls from Lutheranism and Calvinism and shore up the resolve of those Catholics most immediately at risk of falling into schism."<sup>68</sup> Total obedience to the Church was a value the Jesuits supported completely. Ignatius of Loyola had addressed this point in the *Spiritual Exercises* when he stated that the Church's teaching cannot be wrong and must be followed always.<sup>69</sup>

Theatre contributed to this ideological battle by providing stories that analogized the theological struggle existing between Catholics and Protestants, and that demonstrated the

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<sup>68</sup> J. Wright, *God's Soldiers. Adventure, Politics, Intrigue, and Power. A History of the Jesuits*. New York: Doubleday, 2004, 31.

<sup>69</sup> "The thirteenth: if we wish to be sure that we are right in all things, we should always be ready to accept this principle: I will believe that the white that I see is black, if the hierarchical Church so defines it. For, I believe that between the Bridegroom, Christ our Lord, and the Bride, His Church, there is but one spirit, which governs and directs us for the salvation of our souls, for it is by the same Spirit and Lord that the Ten Commandments were given us and who guides and governs our Holy Mother The Church." Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 172.



theological superiority of the Catholic position. The saints became an essential tool of the Counter Reformation in proposing exemplary Christian behavior as both stage characters and objects of worship in the church liturgies.<sup>70</sup> The story of Hermenegildo fulfills this exact purpose by theatricalizing the theological disagreement between Leovigildo's Arianism and Hermenegildo's Catholicism, and the preeminence of Hermenegildo's position. There would have been no doubt among the spectators that the Visigoths represented the Lutherans because both groups had antagonized the Church and the Pope for controlling individual interpretations of the Bible and Christian doctrine and theology. The choice of the dogma of the Trinity as the triggering cause of the conflict was topical for two reasons in the sixteenth century. First, it grounded the plot historically by connecting it to the Nicea Council of 325, wherein the Pope condemned the Arianistic heresy and reinforced the Trinitarian dogma; secondly, it analogized that episode to the modern reality of contemporary Europe, wherein the authority of the Catholic Church had been attacked once again, this time by the Protestant Reformation.<sup>71</sup> The Jesuits were aware of the powerful association that the spectators could establish between the Visigoths and schismatic Lutherans. Both groups defied the power of the Pope as representative of God's will on earth to make decisions for all Christians, and both opposed the Catholic Church's overstepping into issues of government and state ruling. The Jesuits perceived Leovigildo's Arianism and his theological insubordination towards the Church of Rome as analogical to the threat the Protestant had posed in modern times. Just as Leovigildo had defied

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<sup>70</sup> "El control romano sobre la santidad quería proponer modelos, un modelo de sociedad y un modelo de individuo en la sociedad. Se trata de la estricta aplicación de los programas reformadores tridentinos, entre doctrina y disciplina (...) Se trata primero de ensalzar una imagen del hombre, modelo de virtudes y comportamientos. Cada santo, cada beato representa una pieza en el puzzle de la Reforma católica en España y en el resto del mundo." ("The Roman control over the 'saints' holiness' wanted to propose models: a model for the society and a model for the individual in the society. It was the strict application of the Tridentine reformist programs between doctrine and discipline ... The first objective was to praise an image of man who was a model of virtues and behaviors. Every saint represents a piece of a puzzle in the Catholic Reform in Spain and the rest of the world.") Jean-Robert Armogathe, "La fábrica de los santos," in *Homenaje a Henri Guerreiro*, 162.

<sup>71</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 27-29.

the Church by rejecting its most fundamental dogmas, so Martin Luther had attacked the papacy and the hierarchical structure of the Church. They were both enemies of the Church because they aspired to deprive Catholicism of vital dogmatic doctrines that sustained its durability and stability.

An important anti-Protestant lesson that lies at the heart of the Hermenegildo story is the essential value it placed on good deeds as an instrument to secure a place in heaven. Hermenegildo stood up against the heresy espoused by his father and willingly gave his own life to defend the true Church of God. He actively looked for ways to fulfill his obligation towards the Church and saw his own martyrdom as the key to secure his salvation as well as the conversion of Spain to Catholicism. In the world of the Visigoth prince, actions affect the reality of the main character and of the people around him. They carry consequences in the form of rewards or punishments. This clearly opposed the Protestant notion of justification by faith, which maintained that only faith granted salvation. The Protestants viewed good deeds as an outcome of faith and a sign of God's grace, but they did not interpret them as necessary conditions for justification in front of God. Following the Council of Trent, the position of the Catholics was instead that faith and good deeds were co-ordinate means for justification. This is a key concept because it also addressed the issue of divine grace and predestination. The Society of Jesus's motto of *vivir en el mundo* (to live in the world) was grounded in the notion of individual commitment and responsibility towards self and others. It was a world where everybody was to engage daily in the challenge to prove his faith to God in practical ways, and in actualizing the Christian message through actions that would impact and change his reality.

According to Robert E. McNally, it is in Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* that one can find much of the post Tridentine wish for an active renovation within the Church and a new optimistic outlook on the future and role of the Catholicism in the world.

The spiritual doctrine of the *Exercises* is at once optimistic and humanistic. It is optimistic in the sense that it rests on the conviction that the world is good, man is good and God is good. It allows precious little room for an eschatology structured on dark pessimism of flight from the world.<sup>72</sup>

If the world was a place where the faithful had to live and operate, then his actions were paramount to determine whether he was going to be saved or damned.

The Hermenegildo story was also relevant to the fight against the Protestant Reformation because of its emphasis on the sacraments as ceremonies in which God's grace and presence manifested themselves to the community of Christians. This was especially important because the Protestants had downplayed the relevance and dogmatic significance of the sacraments by accusing the Church of using them to perpetrate its power and control over people. As the sacraments were to be administered only by the clergy, they allowed for the existence of a hierarchy within the Church which the Protestants found unjust and unnecessary.

## **2.4 HERMENEGILDO AND THE ISSUE OF REGICIDE**

The Society of Jesus developed rapidly throughout Europe after receiving the official papal approval by Pope Paul III's bull *Regimini militantis ecclesiae* in 1540. Its success was due to an effective bureaucratic apparatus and renowned colleges and universities that became

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<sup>72</sup> Robert E. McNally, "The Council of Trent, the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Catholic Reform," *Church History*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Mar., 1965), 40. (36-49)

prestigious centers producing the most important and influential minds of the time. With these achievements came dangerous enmities that saw the Society of Jesus as a public threat to the survival of monarchical power, and a sign of the overbearing presence of the Vatican in the realms of governing and administration of the state. The Jesuits were accused of using confession as a way to exert their influence on princes and kings. They were charged with having acquired illegal fortunes through their colleges and missions. In Bohemia, they were blamed for manipulating the meaning of the “Letter of Majesty” released by Emperor Rudolph II in 1609 to limit freedom of religion for the Protestants, which constituted more than two-thirds of the entire population of Bohemia. The Jesuits were criticized because they “used their influence to have Protestants excluded from governmental offices, regularly vilified Protestants as heretics in their writings and preaching, and so they continually incited unrest in the kingdom.”<sup>73</sup> The consequences and political exploitation of this accusation led to the Defenestration of Prague in 1618, the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from Bohemia the same year, and the beginning of the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) which ravaged Europe, depleting both human and financial resources.<sup>74</sup>

Whether the Jesuits were the triggering cause of the Thirty Years’ War or a mere instrument exploited by the Protestants to eliminate the Catholic friendly rule of the Habsburgs, it is important to point out that the Society of Jesus had elicited suspicions for quite some time for its incessant mingling with politics. It had also grown so influential and powerful as to cause dangerous antipathies in the high quarters of European courts. By the beginning of the Thirty Years War in 1618, a series of scandals had already shaken the foundation of the Society

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<sup>73</sup> Robert Bireley, *The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War: Kings, Courts, and Confessors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>74</sup> For a detailed account of the complex circumstances leading to the Defenestration of Prague and the Jesuits’ implication in it, see Robert Bireley, 1-32.

of Jesus throughout Europe, but none was as incriminating as that of having hatched the plots to murder anti-catholic monarchs. Regicide was the crime that more than any other discredited and troubled the Society of Jesus during the first one hundred years of its existence.

In 1589, Jacques Clément murdered King Henri III of France, who had become a target of papist attacks for his assassination of two Catholic leaders, Henry I, Duke of Guise (1550-1588) and his brother Louis II, Cardinal de Guise (1555-1588). Some observers linked the murder of the king to the theories of regicide that had started to circulate more profusely after the 1572 massacre of Saint Bartholomew's day, when the Catholic mob exterminated thousands of Huguenots.<sup>75</sup> While it is undeniable that regicide represented a real threat to the legitimate sovereignty of Protestant kings, it is also true that this theory also became an instrument for political retaliation as the following examples show. In 1594, Jean Castel, a former student of the Jesuit college of Clermont in Paris attempted to kill Henri IV of France and "the Jesuits were the prime suspects in the Parlement's search for Chastel's accomplices."<sup>76</sup> Although the investigation failed to link the Society of Jesus to the plot to kill the king, the Jesuits were expelled from the country for eight years. In 1610, François Ravaillac, a Catholic fanatic, succeeded in murdering King Henri IV of France, and the episode led to Gallican jurists and political opponents of the Society of Jesus to bring up new accusations of regicide against the Jesuits.

Despite the lack of any credible evidence linking the Society of Jesus to Ravaillac's attack, their expulsion for complicity in the attempted assassination of Henri IV in 1594 and the production by Jesuit writers of

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<sup>75</sup> "During the final years of the religious wars, the idea that it was in some circumstances licit to murder a king had developed from a dangerous theory advocated by some amongst the Huguenots minority in France into a political reality carried out by members of the Catholic majority." Eric Nelson, *The Jesuits and the Monarchy: Catholic Reform and Political Authority in France (1590-1615)* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 45.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

numerous texts sanctioning tyrannicide provided enough circumstantial evidence to fuel their accusations. Within two weeks of Henri's death opponents publicly accused the Jesuits who advocated tyrannicide in their writings of inspiring impressionable Catholics like Ravaillac to commit regicide.<sup>77</sup>

Strong suspicions that the Society of Jesus nurtured anti-monarchical feelings among their ranks had started to surface predominantly after 1599, the year Jesuit Juan de Mariana published *De rege et regis institutione* (*The King and the Education of the King*), a treatise tackling the legitimacy of deposing and murdering a king. Mariana stated that monarchs should be tolerated as long as possible. He argues that when their rules become unbearable and “if their persistent violation of right order, their subjects’ persons, property, religion, and laws has made them intolerable, there is a proper procedure for correcting them,” mainly appealing to the commonwealth for help. In case these procedures do not accomplish the desired results, Mariana avowed that the monarch could be deposed and sentenced to death because, by abusing his powers and harming his people, he had turned himself into a public enemy. As for a tyrant who usurped the legitimate power of another king or invaded a foreign country unlawfully, Mariana upheld that even a private citizen could take justice in his own hands and murder the tyrant. In order to clarify his theory, Mariana drew on the assassination of King Henri III in 1589 at the hand of Jacques Clément. Mariana intended to be neutral on this delicate issue and made sure to mention that Clément was not a Jesuit but did, in fact, study with the Dominicans. However, in spite of his best efforts, he made the tactical mistake of calling the assassination a “memorable crime” and a “noble monument,” and of writing the line “Thus perished Clément, one of the eternal glories of France, as it seemed to very many.” These words were removed from all subsequent editions of his book but the damage was

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 153.

done.<sup>78</sup> While other religious personalities belonging to different religious orders had tackled the topic of regicide and tyrannicide in the past, Mariana took a bolder position on the issue and, as a consequence, his words would haunt the Society of Jesus for many years to come.

Nevertheless, the Jesuits did not shy away from publicly addressing the issue in the vitriolic debates surrounding the rights of kings and popes with works such as Cardinal Bellarmine's *Treatise on the Power of the Roman Pontiff in Temporal Affairs* in 1610, German Martin Becan's *The Anglican Controversy over the Power of King and Pope* in 1612, and Spanish Francisco Suarez's *Defense of the Faith* in 1614. Even though those books were not as audacious and explicit as Mariana's *De rege* in discussing the legitimacy of regicide, they were adamant in defending the papacy's superiority over the monarchy.

The enemies of the Jesuits fully exploited Mariana's ideas in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. A group of devout Catholics who opposed James I's mistreatment of English Catholics planned to blow up the parliament when the king was scheduled to address the House of Lords and the House of Commons for the state opening. The plot was foiled just a few hours before its proposed enactment, but the Jesuits were accused alternately of knowing about the plot and having done nothing to prevent it, and of being participants in its actualization. English Jesuit Henry Garnet, a close friend of the king, was tried and sentenced to death on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1606, because he had heard about the Gunpowder Plot in confession from Oswald Tesermond (commonly known as Greenway) and he did not report it to the authorities. The direct consequence of the Jesuits' alleged responsibility in the plot to kill the King of England was the Oath of Allegiance, a document issued by James I sanctioning that the "Catholics forswear any right of the Pope to depose or take any political action against a

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<sup>78</sup> Harro Höpfl, *Jesuit Political Thought: The Society of Jesus and the State, c. 1540-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 320

sovereign ruler.”<sup>79</sup> This document did not oppose papal excommunication, simply the possibility that the English monarch could be deposed or murdered. The Jesuits wrote a number of libels and treatises defending their innocence and denouncing that an oath should be required not only from the papists but also from the many Protestants who had proved themselves seditious and anti-monarchical.

Claudius Acquaviva, the Society of Jesus’s Father General, addressed the prickly question that confession could easily become a matter of public interest when it clashed with the political interests of the monarchs. The deliberation of Acquaviva meant to avoid the scandal that ensued in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot. He ordered that a Jesuit priest could not function as a confessor to a man who had committed a crime of treason, and named the Duke of Condé as an example because he was accused of being involved in the plot to murder Henry VI. This would have put the Jesuit confessor in the awkward position of knowing the existence of a crime, but it would also forbid him from talking about it and prevent it from happening since the secret was revealed under the seal of confessional. The decisions of Acquaviva, which were officially accepted in 1610 and were confirmed by his successor Vincenzo Vitelleschi, show the discomfort and fears of repercussions some members of the Society of Jesus felt toward the delicate and embarrassing issue of regicide.<sup>80</sup>

The suspension of the Jesuit priest Nicolas Caussin from his role of confessor to the king of France, and his consequent exile, exemplifies the delicate and dangerous position held by the confessor of a monarch. The story of the political rise and fall of Caussin is even more poignant because he published in 1620 a collection of tragedies containing the martyr play *Hermenegildus*, the first version of the saint’s story in seventeenth century France which

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<sup>79</sup> Bireley, 4.

<sup>80</sup> Laura Laurencich-Minelli and Paulina Numhauser Bar-Magen, eds., *El Silencio Protagonista: El Primer Siglo Jesuita en el Virreinato del Perú 1567-1667* (Quito: Ediciones ABYA-YALA, 2004), 30



inspired “the *Herménigilde* of La Calprènedé, that of Gaspar Olivier, the *Indégonde* of Montauban, the *Sainte-Hermenigilde* of Jesus-Maria, which appeared about the middle of the century, and the *Hermenegildus* of father Porée.”<sup>81</sup> Cardinal Richelieu had personally chosen Caussin in 1637 to be the confessor of King Louis XIII hoping that the young Jesuit would be easy to direct and malleable enough to accept the Cardinal’s guidance. Caussin, however, displayed his disapproval of the Cardinal’s political maneuverings and openly criticized him in front of the king. Louis XIII asked Caussin to repeat his accusation in front of the Prime Minister and Cardinal and “Richelieu won the argument that ensued, and threatened to resign unless the king dismissed his confessor.”<sup>82</sup> Richelieu accused the confessor of wronging not only the king but also the Society of Jesus and supported his arguments by citing Jesuit General Acquaviva’s recommendations that the king’s confessor be always discreet and never meddling or interfering with royal politics:

De ser mêler en affaires où ils ne sont pas appelés, de fréquenter trop la Cour, d’y aller sans y éter mandés ou si quelque grande nécessité ou office de piété n’y oblige, et s’ingérer ou de recommander les affaires des uns et des autres.<sup>83</sup>

Richelieu had requested that Caussin be sent into exile to Canada, but his superiors sent him to Rennes where he remained until 1643; by that time both Richelieu and Louis XIII had passed away, the former in 1642, the latter in 1643. Back in Paris, Caussin did not stay out of trouble for

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<sup>81</sup> George Drew Hocking, *A Study of the Tragoediae Sacrae of Father Caussin*. The John Hopkins Studies in Romance Literatures and Languages, Vol. XLIV (Baltimore: J.H. Furst Company, 1943), 60.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>83</sup> “[The prohibitions] to meddle in businesses where they are not called, to visit the court too much, to go there without being invited (unless there is some pious reason to do so), and to interfere or recommend anybody.” Quoted in Philippe Lécivain, “L’ éloquence sacrée à l’épreuve de la politique. Quand un conflit d’influence devient une affaire d’état.” *Nicolas Caussin: rhétorique et spiritualité à l’époque de Louis XIII*, ed. by Sophie Conte (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2007), 66.

long and in 1650 he was sent into exile again, this time to Normandy, for having offended Richelieu's successor, Cardinal Mazzarino, with the publication of his *Regnum Dei*.

In 1605, another accusation was moved against the Jesuits for their mingling with the legitimate powers of monarchical or governmental regimes. Pope Paul V had imposed an interdict on Venice because it had refused to relinquish two members of the clergy accused of crimes and to "rescind limitation on the acquisition and use of church properties." This event, which led to the breaking of all diplomatic relationships between the Vatican and Venice, polarized much of Europe and caused an international crisis. The Society of Jesus completely supported the papal decision to prohibit the administering of all sacramental and religious rites in Venice, and for this reason, they were expelled from Venice and returned only in 1656.<sup>84</sup>

The suspicion of Jesuit intervention in the elimination of monarchs who opposed Catholicism presented itself again in 1610 in relation to the attempted murder of Henry V, which again was blamed against the Jesuits and resurrected the vitriolic arguments over Juan de Mariana's treatise.

Suspicions of Jesuit traitorous behavior never subsided and were actually incremented by Jesuits' opposition to some of the royal policies in the colonies. This eventually led to their expulsion from Latin America in 1767. Charles III of Spain motivated the expulsion with a sibylline explanation that he was "conscious of his duty to uphold obedience, tranquility and justice among his people, and (was also acting) for other urgent, just, and compelling causes, which he was locking away in his royal breast."<sup>85</sup> Magnus Mörner traces Charles's decision back to the "nationalist hypersensitivity of Spanish regalism," which the Jesuits had continuously

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<sup>84</sup> Bireley, 3-4.

<sup>85</sup> Cited in Magnus Mörner, "The Expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain and Spanish America in 1767 in Light of Eighteenth-Century Regalism," *The Americas*, Vol. 23, No. 2. (Oct., 1966), 156 (156-164)

upset with their defense of papal authority.<sup>86</sup> The upheavals that took place in the Guaraní missions in Uruguay also contributed to popular portrayal of the Jesuits as anti-royalist and their expulsion from the Spanish colonies. During what is known as the ‘War of the Seven Reductions’, the Jesuits fought side by side with the Indians to stop the transfer from Spain to Portugal of a large territory in contemporary Uruguay hosting a number of Jesuit missions. In this occasion, royal troops crushed the resistance and both Jesuits and Indians were destroyed.<sup>87</sup> This event exemplified the Society of Jesus’s struggle to maintain its religious and civic mission while being a subordinate appendage of the Spanish crown, according to the deliberations of the 1493 Real Patronato de Indias. The enemies of the Jesuits in Spain and Portugal used the insurgence to sustain their theory that the Society of Jesus did not fully support the monarchy and that they were unlawfully accumulating large amounts of money thanks to their highly sophisticated administration of the missions.

As demonstrated by the case of Juan de Mariana writing about the assassination of King Henri III, it was a difficult task for the Jesuits to address the right of the pope to depose a king without arising suspicions of betrayal. Nevertheless, this discussion was one of vital importance for the Society of Jesus because it affected the very existence of the Catholic Church in Europe and its future survival in the face of the Protestant Reformation. The story of *Hermenegildo* proved to be the perfect instrument to address these ideas in a manner that was not threatening to the institution of the monarchy, because it hid its political theory behind both the reassuring label of *comedia martiriológica* as well as the overall educational and recreational scope of Jesuit theatre. Nevertheless, the *Hermenegildo* tragedies investigated the topic of regicide that Mariana and other writers of the time had tackled in their works. It gave the Jesuits the chance to

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>87</sup> This episode has been portrayed in the 1986 Warner Bros. movie *The Mission*, directed by Roland Joffé, with actors Robert De Niro and Jeremy Irons.

investigate the relationship between the temporal power of the king and the spiritual power of the Church, the reasons the king was subordinated to the pope, the circumstances in which a king could be legitimately deposed or murdered, and ultimately the things the Society of Jesus deemed necessary to render unto Caesar and those to render unto God (Matthew 22:21.) For the Jesuits, Hermenegildo was not only a Christian martyr who offered his life to God as a sacrifice for his salvation and that of Spain. He was also a noble prince who defied the authority of a legitimate ruler and tried to dispossess him to become king himself. As most of the chroniclers noticed, Leovigildo had elevated Hermenegildo to the position of ruling prince, sharing the power and the position of a true monarch. Just as his brother Liuva had adjoined Leovigildo to the role of co-ruler, so Leovigildo had given his son a territory to administer, in the hope of easing the transition of the succession at his death. Hermenegildo was not excluded from governing; he was not deprived of his hereditary rights; he was not mistreated in any way by his father. As a matter of fact, the picture we get of Leovigildo from both the historical documentations and the dramaturgical texts, is that of a loving father who is torn between the demands of the state and the love for his family. Why then did Hermenegildo have to rebel? Why are his actions not only justified by the Jesuits, but also upheld as exemplary of true Christian behavior? The answer lies with what Juan de Mariana defines as intolerable behavior of the king, which can lead to his deposition and execution. Leovigildo stopped being a legitimate king and became a tyrant when he accepted Arianism, a heresy the Church had tried to eradicate for centuries. Moreover, starting with the Council of Toledo of 580, he had started to mistreat and harrass his Catholic subjects in order to force them to embrace Arianism, and this act placed him in direct opposition to the Vatican. The debate over whether it was even fathomable to establish a government without the support of the Catholic Church had a long history and had long

engaged intellectuals, especially after English King Henry VIII had separated from the Roman Church and created the Anglican Church. However, this topic was even more pressing at the end of the sixteenth century because many north European monarchies had accepted Protestantism and were moving away from Catholicism's sphere of influence. The many stories inspired by Hermenegildo's resistance against a schismatic king actively involved audiences throughout Europe both in the contemplation of the tragic consequences of despotic behavior, as well as in the realistic possibility of deposition for a monarch who has alienated his subjects. What is at the heart of the debate, however, is not a liberal call for freedom of religion, because the Jesuits were not concerned with granting that liberty to non-Christians, nor did they oppose the use of violence and military action when needed. The Society of Jesus was making a case for Hermenegildo's legitimate attempt to dethrone his father, on the ground that Leovigildo defied the authority of the Pope. The supremacy of the spiritual power of the Pope over the king was implicitly stated by Leonard Lessius who affirmed that a tyrant could be "deposed and declared a [public] enemy by the commonwealth, or the council of the kingdom, or someone else having authority, so that it would become legitimate to attempt something against his person."<sup>88</sup> According to the authoritative opinion of Lessius, the only person having authority over a king would be the Pope, the representative of God on earth.<sup>89</sup> Jesuit priest Pedro de Ribadeneira had expressed a similar idea in his widely known *Princeps Christianus* where he reiterated the expectation that all princes should observe the holy laws.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Cited in Harro Höpfl, 318.

<sup>89</sup> Leonard Lessius (1554-1623) was one of the most famous theologians of his time. He composed many tracts on theology and morality, among which *De justitia et jure* about the relevance of justice, *De gratia efficaci* about the topics of grace and predestination, and *Defensio potestatis summi pontificis* in which he defended the authority of the pope against the claims of James I.

<sup>90</sup> Höpfl, 109-111.

The fact that the historical Hermenegildo lost the war and was beheaded did not impact negatively the devotional narrative structure of his story, because in the Jesuit vision of the world Hermenegildo had won his war by losing his life. His death by martyrdom is not a punishment, but the tangible proof that God had chosen him to be his messenger. The conversion of Spain made his martyrdom worthwhile because it opened the door of Heaven to an entire nation. In the end, God's providential design was completely successful in the replacement of a heretical king with a Christian one. It is not surprising that most of the painters who depicted his martyrdom represented him wearing royal robes, scepter, and crown. Francisco Herrera, the Father, in his 1620 c. *Apoteosis de San Hermenegildo*, painted the martyr while he is ascending to heaven on a cloud. Hermenegildo wears the royal identifiers of the king, as in most other paintings inspired by the saint, but here his identity as king is emphatically stressed. The saint/king occupies the very center of the painting facing the observers. Although he is ascending to heaven on a cloud, his posture and size do not suggest an upward movement; on the contrary, he is firmly placed in the middle of the painting and his boots and armor convey an idea of solidity and stability. He appears almost static while his gaze forces the onlooker into a contemplation of his royal persona. Heaven is present in the form of a number of cherubs flying above and on the sides of the saint, but in Herrera's work heaven can wait until Hermenegildo is displaying his regality. The position of the crown as the main signifier of kingship features predominantly as two angels place the crown on Hermenegildo's head during what could be understood as a true coronation ceremony. The ax held by one of the angels and the crucifix Hermenegildo holds in his right hand are symbols of his martyrdom and imply that the martyr achieved his sanctity because of his death. However, they do not thwart the representation of the saint as a legitimate king.

While debating over the legitimacy of regicide was a dangerous minefield where a Jesuit priest could easily end up censored by the Society of Jesus, or attacked by Protestants and royalists for treason, theatre and painting guaranteed a larger freedom of expression where the religious order could explore more or less openly the crucial theological issues and political topics that impacted its daily life.

## **2.5 HERMENEGILDO AND THE REACTIVATION OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE**

The Hermenegildo story reactivates one of the main narratives in the entire Bible: the willing sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind. This story shows the selfless act of an innocent being who, like the scapegoat of Hebraic culture, took the sins of all people onto himself and expiated them on the cross. Overlooked or censored by early Christians as a sign of Christ's ignominious death, the cross becomes a powerful rhetorical tool during the Counter Reformation as the very symbol of Christ's ultimate sacrifice, which enabled humans to overcome the mortality passed down to them by Adam and Eve's original sin and restored their wholeness in the afterlife. The crucifixion did not exhaust its epistemological potential in the pain that it causes, because as a symbol it also represented the triumph over pain with its promise of resurrection and eternal life. The body and the pain inflicted upon it were viewed as vehicles to reach a different spiritual status. They became the site of a special communion, as well as a transformation, where the divine was made human and the human could partake of the divine. Graham Ward places suffering as the primary condition of Christ's incarnation and explains that "In suffering the soul is recognized at the surface of the body; the ensoulment of the body is most

exposed.”<sup>91</sup> Ward highlights once more the conjuncture of the spiritual (soul) and the physical realms (body), saying that “The cross becomes the place where the two forms of suffering –the sacrificial and that which is a consequence of sin- meet,” because Jesus was both the selfless sacrificial victim who offered his life to expiate the sins of others and also “the suffering victim of the disrupted order of creation brought about by the lust to dominate.”<sup>92</sup> As Paul explained in his letter to the Romans (8:3), Jesus filled the distance and separation existing between God and man by incarnating himself as a man with a corruptible and weak body opened to sin and temptation like that of Adam and Eve. By renouncing that very same body on the cross, Christ demonstrated flesh’s finitude as a transient and perishable object, and its finality as sacrifice leading to God. Jesus’s role as Agnus Dei, sacrificial lamb offered to the divinity, achieved the goal of bringing man to a closer and more profound relationship with God.<sup>93</sup>

Since Christ’s teaching and actions were exemplary and deemed worth imitating, Christians also looked at his death as an object of discussion and devout emulation. For Ignatius of Loyola the contemplation of the crucifixion was a crucial spiritual exercise because it brought the exercitant to experience directly the most pivotal moment in human history: the Incarnation. Through the process of imagining the scene of the Calvary, the student was able to reach spiritual proximity to God, a better understanding of the incommensurable value of his sacrifice on the cross, and as a consequence, a more valuable relationship with God.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Graham Ward, “Suffering and Incarnation,” in Robert Gibbs, Elliot R. Wolfson, ed., *Suffering Religion* (London: Routledge, 2002), 169.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>93</sup> “This is the sense in which communication is established between the sacred and the profane worlds. Both sacred and profane are reinterpreted but not so as to obliterate the distinction. There are two worlds and Jesus Christ is both victim and priest who enables us to pass from one to the other here and now.” D.R. Jones, “Sacrifice and Holiness,” in S.W. Sykes, ed., *Sacrifice and Redemption: Durham Essays in Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 18.

<sup>94</sup> “Imagine Christ our Lord before you, hanging upon the cross. Speak with Him of how from being the Creator He became man, and how, possessing eternal life, He submitted to temporal death to die for our sins. Then I shall meditate upon myself and ask, ‘What have I done for Christ? What am I now doing for Christ? What ought I do for



In discussing Paul's theology of the cross, one must avoid making the mistake of thinking that Christ's sacrifice functioned as a substitution for mankind's death, and that Christ's death made obsolete man's continuous atoning sacrifice.

...he died not *instead* of men but *as* man; 'he died for all, therefore all have died' (2 Cor. 5:14). That is to say, fallen men do not escape death – any more than they escape wrath; *they die!* Either they die their own death without identifying themselves with Christ; or else they identify themselves with Christ so that they die his death –his flesh works out in their flesh. And only insofar as it does so do they live.<sup>95</sup>

Paul's recommendation to all Christians in Romans 12:1 is to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." In his interpretation of this passage, Edward Hulmes explains that "this idea finds a still deeper expression in acts which require of the one who makes the sacrifice the voluntary surrender of life itself, in the service of what is held to be the higher authority."<sup>96</sup> While it is indisputable that Paul alluded to different types of sacrifices, his words do not exclude, nor discourage, from the sacrifice of one's own life to the glory of God.

The enormous fascination of the Counter Reformation with Christ's suffering on the cross inspired profoundly the drama of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Spain, both the *comedia martiriológica* (dramas based on the lives of the martyrs) and *comedia hagiográfica* (dramas based on the lives of the saints) used the blueprint of Jesus's sacrifice to create devotionally edifying stories based on the lives of the Christian martyrs and saints. The general postulation behind these dramas was that martyrs and saints re-presented and analogized the

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Christ?' And as I see Him in this condition, hanging upon the cross, I shall meditate on the thought that come to my mind." Antonio T. De Nicolas, *Powers of Imagining: Ignatius de Loyola; A Philosophical Hermeneutics of Imagining Through the Collected Works of Ignatius de Loyola* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 117.

<sup>95</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, "Paul's Understanding of the Death of Jesus as Sacrifice," in S.W. Sykes, 51-52.

<sup>96</sup> Edward Hulmes, "The Semantics of Sacrifice." Ibid. 279.

structural qualities of Jesus' own sacrifice, and therefore they partook of the same divine nature. Great emphasis was placed on the incommensurable value of the protagonist's death. In fact, there was always someone else benefiting from his death, either immediately or posthumously. Comparisons to Jesus's sacrifice were explicitly drawn, and the transcendent value of saints and martyrs' actions was stressed. Those characters were driven by a passion for death, and sought their martyrdom as a heavenly gift that would restore them to the eternal life of the soul.

In light of these reflections, Hermenegildo was the perfect character to embody the self-sacrificing Christian hero. Not only was he willing to die to defend the true faith, but through his death, he made the Catholic religion available for others. Hermenegildo proved his faith by choosing God over his father, complying with Jesus's recommendation in Matthew 10:38 ("He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me"). He also renounced his prestigious position within the royal family and his future as king of the Visigoths to follow the righteous path of the Christian faith as the Bible recommended in Matthew 16:24 ("If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"), and reiterated almost identically in Mark 8:34, and Luke 9:23 and 14:27. The general assumption is that all of Hermenegildo's actions were the result of long suffering, both physical and emotional. The fact that he deserted his father to follow God was treated as a difficult and painful decision in the tragedies inspired by his story. The death of his wife Ingunda and the departure of his only son for Constantinople contributed to create the picture of a suffering man who was enduring the severing of all family ties and the loss of all his fortunes. Furthermore, the details of his capture, the humiliation of being put in prison, and his death sentence carried out by beheading added to the picture of expiating pain that were also common to the Calvary scene. However, just as with Christ, whose "loss of this identity

coincides with the establishing of his identity in the opposing terms, in terms of self-offering to God,” Hermenegildo was empowered by the pain he had to endure and discovered in his suffering his divine nature.<sup>97</sup> His ascending to heaven is scripted in the finale of most of the dramas and depicted in all of the paintings based on his story. Francisco Herrera’s 1653 *El triunfo de San Hermenegildo* portrayed the saint as he ascends to heaven, surrounded by flying angels playing musical instruments.<sup>98</sup> The redeeming, purifying, and divinizing power of the saint’s martyrdom is quite evident in the association the painter established between the cross, as symbol of his terrestrial death, and his ascent to heaven, the recognition of his newly acquired spiritual status. Hermenegildo does not gaze in the direction of the observers; instead, he is mystically enraptured in the contemplation of the cross he carries in his right hand. While it was common for Baroque and mannerist painters to portray the cross in their works, especially when depicting sacred topics, Herrera’s painting features the cross in a peculiarly dynamic manner and as the focal point of the whole scene. It is an extension of Hermenegildo’s curved body and it moves the focus and the symmetry of the composition towards the left-hand corner, where a bright light suggests the opening of the gates of heaven. The cross is not simply an object that Hermenegildo carries but it appears to be the powerful force that moves and drives the body of the saint in an helicoidally flight towards its reward. It is interesting to notice that the Arian priest who tried to administer Communion to Hermenegildo before his death occupies the left-hand corner of the painting and is portrayed in a desperate pose, shielding his eyes from the brightness emanating from the saint’s figure. To his left, Francisco Herrera depicts Leovigildo with an expression of disbelief as he touches the top of his head to look for the crown that one of the angels has taken away from him. It is important to stress that the painter represented

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<sup>97</sup> Arthur C. McGill, *Suffering: A Test of Theological Method* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), 95-96

<sup>98</sup> This painting by Francisco Herrera the Young, also known as El Mozo, is exhibited at the Museo del Prado in Madrid.

Hermenegildo as deserving the royal title, as if to underline that governing was not possible without the support of the Catholic faith. The colors used in the section occupied by Leovigildo and the Arian priest are dark and appear to distort the features of the characters, while the upper part of the painting shows both a deep light blue and gold as background for the saint's ascent to heaven.

## **2.6 HERMENEGILDO AND MISSIONARY WORK**

It is difficult to generalize the colonial experience of the Society of Jesus because it differs greatly geographically and historically. It is also problematic to discuss the positive impact this religious order had in the regions occupied by western countries because, no matter how constructive their contributions might have been, the Jesuits were, nonetheless, an essential part of the political and religious establishments that systematically stripped the indigenous populations of their rights, their land, their culture, their religions, and their freedom. One of their greatest injustices was that of convincing, and sometimes forcing, the nomadic or village-based aboriginals to live in the mission and thus completely changing their way of life.

While the Jesuits' complicity in the violent colonization and forced conversion of native indigenous populations is beyond dispute, it is also clear that they opposed in many instances the indiscriminate use of force adopted by the Spaniards and Portuguese conquistadors. Father Luis de Valdivia defended the rights of the Indian slaves against the whites and complained to Philip III so vehemently about the conditions of the Indians in Chile that the king elected him royal visitor and administrator of that region. With his new title, Valdivia "gave ten thousand Indian

slaves their freedom and persuaded the rebel chief U Tablame and sixty of his caciques to lay down their arms on 8 December 1612.”<sup>99</sup> In 1637, Antonio Ruiz de Montoya pleaded with King Philip IV to stop the attacks of Spanish slave traders on the Jesuit reductions of Peru, which had brought the bloody mass murder of hundreds of Indians and innumerable acts of violence.<sup>100</sup>

The Jesuits were late in joining other monastic orders in their missionary work. While the Franciscans started the evangelization of New Spain in 1523, the Dominicans arrived in 1526, and the Augustinians in 1533, the Jesuits appeared only in 1572 and initially worked almost exclusively as preceptors to young Spaniards, only later dedicating their efforts to missionary work.<sup>101</sup> All Jesuit missions were opened after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), in a period where the emphasis of the Church was all on achieving a rapid conversion of the indigenous populations, not on cultural adaptation and cultural analysis of the native people. As Charles Polzer points out, the Church expectation was that “the doctrine was to be learned thoroughly; the rituals were to be observed exactly; Christians were to be Christians everywhere in the world,” therefore the methods applied to achieve these results could be various and heterogeneous but had to be effective.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, the Jesuits had a distinctly different outlook on the process of evangelizing and converting the natives that set them apart from the other religious orders. Firstly, they were intellectuals who valued education and were interested in lasting results. Whether they were teaching Latin or Greek to a young Spaniard attending one of their colleges or preaching the Gospels to an Indian who knew nothing about Christianity, they were concerned with real changes not superficial retaining of information. Secondly, the

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<sup>99</sup> Christopher Hollis, *The Jesuits: A History* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968), 79

<sup>100</sup> See John Patrick Donnelly, ed. and trans., *Jesuit Writings of the Early Modern Period, 1540-1640* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), 111-121.

<sup>101</sup> See José González Núñez, *Las misiones Jesuitas y presidio en la provincia de Sinaloa 1591-1767* (Mexico: Cobaes, 1998), 69.

<sup>102</sup> Charles W. Polzer, *Rules and Precepts of the Jesuit Missions of Northwestern New Spain* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976), 40

Jesuits were committed to try every possible communicative strategy and methodology to reach their goal, including learning the local habits, languages, and rites, in order to find their way into the hosting culture. In some fortunate cases, this led to a deeper understanding and respect towards the local population. Jesuit José de Acosta believed in the relativism of all cultures and maintained that the Indians represented an early stage of culture and civilization which was common for all different peoples. The natural consequence of his argument was that the colonies, specifically those of South America where he worked, were a workshop where the westerners could understand important lessons about the processes of universal history, as well as about their own culture.<sup>103</sup> The Jesuits were among the first missionaries to learn the original languages of the regions where they worked in order to communicate more effectively with the natives. They compiled useful grammars of the foreign languages they studied as well as many translations of religious books. This meant that the conversion in the Jesuit mission took longer, but happened in a more organic way because the indigenous populations were given sufficient time to process the Christian evangelical message instead of being forced to accept it under the threat of death and violence. The Jesuits' concern with the "qualità intellettuale della penetrazione nelle culture non cristiane" ("the intellectual quality of the penetration into non-Christian culture") is a sign of their understanding the relativistic nature of culture, and to some extent, of their partial tolerance of native culture. The Society of Jesus was also aware that full conversion was going to be very hard to achieve if the missionaries continued to oppose the idea of fully immersing themselves into the original culture and, when necessary, taking on its rites, customs, and ceremonial habits. Italian Jesuit Roberto de Nobili maintained that adaptability was a quality that characterized the proselytizing mission of Saint Paul and the apostles, therefore it

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<sup>103</sup> *Jesuitas 400 años en Colombia*, Colección Nuestra Historia, No 2, Noviembre de 2003 (Bogotá: Editorial Kimpres, 2003), 22.

should also have been encouraged in modern missions, because it allowed the priests to get closer to the natives and touch their souls.<sup>104</sup>

The missions constituted a critical institution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries because it guaranteed control and stability over the natives and assured the continuation of the financial exploitation of land and people. As the missionaries worked indefatigably in uncharted and unexplored territories, their presence provided the motherland with a continuous flow of new working subjects, and pushed the frontier forward, enlarging and strengthening the empire. The missions were part of the establishment that enabled the colonizing European nations to continue the financial exploitation of the natives and accumulate the riches they needed to finance their wars, maintain their bureaucratic apparatuses, and keep up their extravagant lifestyles. The missions were also the stronghold of Christianity in new worlds; the citadels from where the evangelical message could touch and civilize the natives.

How could a theatrical rendition of the story of a Visigothic prince who lived long before the Americas were even discovered be relevant to what was happening in the oversea missions? What lessons could a medieval Spanish martyr teach to those young Jesuits working hard to win over the souls of the natives? How could Hermenegildo facilitate their missionary intents and help them in their daily struggles? The Hermenegildo story was exemplary because it dealt with a devout and innocent man who renounced his high ranked position as prince and heir to the throne to embark on a spiritual journey that would lead him to his death, and subsequent eternal life. In the various dramatic pieces based on the story of the saint, Hermenegildo desired to be close to God through the acceptance of Christ's cross. Besides relying on the grace of God

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<sup>104</sup> "By following this method of adaptation, we certainly seem to bring about the desired result. People of every class approach us and listen without any fear to the teaching of the faith. Members of royal families and men who hold a high position in the state, and, what is more, Brahmins too, well versed in Law and philosophy, do not hesitate to pay us that reverence which befits our calling." John Patrick Donnelly, 110-111.

and confiding in his higher powers, he did not shy away from the most demanding personal sacrifices. He admitted the wrongness of the Arian doctrine, abandoned his former beliefs, rejected his father's authority, engaged him in a civil war, suffered the loss of family members, accepted his incoming death with courage, and ultimately affected the life of others by setting an example that would move his brother Recaredo to convert. By doing so, Hermenegildo demonstrated the possibility of winning over an entire nation by setting an exemplary model of behavior.

Given that the theological underpinnings of the Society of Jesus were rooted in the mystic communion with God through death, it is not surprising that such an example was to be set by way of martyrdom. Hermenegildo reflects fully the sacrificial model proposed by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss's *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, and summarized by Mary Karen Dahl in her comparison of performance and religious rituals:

[Hubert and Mauss] describe a tripartite structure that derives from the process of encounter: (1) the formula begins with rites of entry that guide and protect profane beings as they prepare to engage the sacred; (2) the central act of the sacrifice, the violent deed, links the two realms climactically; (3) rites of exit or disengagement end the procedure. Although the ritual has infinite variations, a simplified composite would include six elements: place, time, implements, offering (i.e., victim), sacrificer (i.e., executioner), and beneficiary (an individual or community).<sup>105</sup>

In the Hermenegildo's narrative, the first step corresponds to the arrest and imprisonment of the hero, which physically and spiritually distances him from the profane world and allows him to reach a closer relationship with God. The second is the moment of his death by beheading and the third is his ascent to heaven, which seals Hermenegildo's role as sacrificial offer by attaching

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<sup>105</sup> Mary Karen Dahl, *Political Violence in Drama: Classical Models, Contemporary Variations* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987), 4.



to his death the salvation of the Spanish people. The fact that the hero dies a violent death makes his actions valuable because, according to Dahl, “violence transforms the victim in terms of its value to the community at large. No other action could have changed it. We have arrived at the singular paradox of violence: the act of destruction is an act of salvation.”<sup>106</sup> Hermenegildo’s endurance of death and dismemberment spoke volumes about how much he cared for the propagation of Catholicism among the Spaniards, thus linking the enormity of his sacrifice to the all-embrasive love he felt for God and his community.

The Hermenegildo trope addressed the deep urgency and satisfaction that the Catholic Church and the Jesuits felt for the personal sacrifice of one’s own life, as well as the individual and collective rewards associated with it.

These traits qualified Hermenegildo not only as a stage character, but also as a pictorial subject. His martyrdom became a favorite topic of Spanish painters who appropriated it for the devotional quality of his death. Court painter Juan Carreño painted *San Hermenegildo* in 1656, depicting the saint in his prison cell in an attitude of serene composure. The protagonist holds the chains, symbol of his present situation, and a life-sized cross, foreshadowing his future martyrdom. The large cross, which the saint looks at with transfixed eyes, equates Hermenegildo’s death to that of Christ by suggesting that the martyr might die on the very empty cross he is handling. The painting conflates the earthly and heavenly destinies of Hermenegildo by showing in the background an ethereal light and angels awaiting the martyr hero and the stark darkness of the prison visible in the foreground. Painter Francisco de Goya drew a blueprint of the martyrdom of San Hermenegildo for a large painting to be exhibited in the church of San Fernando de Torrero in Saragossa. Here he portrayed the last moment in the life of Hermenegildo in a lugubrious prison cell. Even though the saint is wearing his royal clothes as a

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 5.

clear signal of his aristocratic dignity, the general atmosphere of the drawing is one of seclusion, separation, claustrophobia, and imminent death. Goya used dark colors and the chiaroscuro technique to enhance those qualities. Nevertheless, it is the position of the saint and his facial expression that serves to contrast the nocturnal feel of the work. Hermenegildo appears relaxed, ready to meet his final destiny, and animated by a faith that is at once soothing and powerful. There is no fear or uncertainty in the character, only a mystical desire to release his body in death and embrace the heavenly afterlife.

The value of converting, the acceptance of Jesus's cross, the proximity with God assured through a selfless sacrifice, and the certainty of benefiting others through one's own actions, are the main structural tenets of the Hermenegildo story, and they can be traced in hundreds of stories inspired by lives of other martyrs and saints. Those tales had an immense impact on the history of the Society of Jesus. According to Gonçalves de Câmara who wrote *Reminiscences*, also known as the *Autobiography of Ignatius Loyola*, the conversion of Saint Ignatius was due to a book of the lives of Spanish saints that Ignatius read when he was recovering from the wounds he had received during the battle of Pamplona.<sup>107</sup> The founder of the Jesuits recognized the didactic and theological value of reading the lives of saints in the *Spiritual Exercises*, where he recommended that the student think about the edifying lives of the saints even when consuming his meals in order to “take less delight and sensual pleasure in his corporal nourishment.”<sup>108</sup> Those tales were extremely popular throughout Europe and “not insignificantly, it was the Bollandists and other Jesuits who took the lead in publishing sacred biographies for a popular as

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<sup>107</sup> “Still, Our Lord was helping him, causing other thoughts, which were born of the things he was reading, to follow these. For, while reading the lives of Our Lord and the saints, he would stop to think, reasoning with himself: ‘How would it be, if I did this which St Francis did, and this which St Dominic did?’ ...his all way of thinking was to say to himself: ‘St Francis did this, so I must do it; St Dominic did this, so I must do it.’” Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean, trans. *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings. Reminiscences, Spiritual Diary, Select Letters* including the text of *The Spiritual Exercises* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 15.

<sup>108</sup> Antonio T. De Nicolas, 142.

well as scholarly audience.”<sup>109</sup> Not only did the Jesuits recognize the immense potential of hagiography to affect and transform behavior, they were also masters in using it to its fullest. Together with the lives of Christian saints and martyrs of all periods, the Society of Jesus also cultivated the composition of devotional literature inspired by its own saints and martyrs. For instance, the value placed on an exemplary life and glorious death is evident in the Jesuits’ exploitation of Francis Xavier, Ignatius of Loyola’s most devout collaborator and friend. Through his tenure as a missionary in Goa, India, China and Japan, Xavier had acquired such notoriety among the autochthonous populations that he was apparently worshipped by Muslims, Buddhists, animists and Christians alike. The messianic qualities associated with his persona led to personal cults among the natives who saw him as a guru-like figure with spiritual powers. His fellow Jesuits on the other side of the ocean were equally enthusiastic about his achievements, and his work inspired more Jesuits to emulate his life and undertake missionary work overseas.<sup>110</sup> As J.C.H. Aveling notes, the fame of Francis Xavier both coincided with and was fostered by the missionary impulse of many young Jesuits who “desperately wanted to revive the spiritual depth, initiative and informality which they felt had been crushed out of the Society in Europe.”<sup>111</sup> As individual priests had to apply to the provincial authorities of the Society of Jesus

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<sup>109</sup> Andrés Pérez de Ribas, 22.

<sup>110</sup> “To the Jesuits in 1622 Xavier’s career seemed an exact fulfillment of the Gospel promises. He was, it appeared to them, the first recipient of the special outpouring of the Spirit on the young Society, the harbinger of a new Apostolic Age. In this view the same Spirit rested upon the chosen generation of Xavier’s successors in the east, especially Alessandro Valignano, Matteo Ricci, Rudolf Acquaviva, Roberto de Nobili and Benito de Goes. Through all of them the Spirit set in train an avalanche of conversion which was surely destined to bring all Asia within the Church.” J.C.H. Aveling, *The Jesuits* (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1982), 170.

<sup>111</sup> Andrés Pérez de Ribas, *History of the Triumphs of Our Holy Faith Amongst the Most barbarous and Fierce Peoples of the New World*, trans. Daniel T. Reff, Maureen Ahern, and Richard K. Danford (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1999), 169.

to be granted the right to do missionary work, it was fundamental for the Jesuits to use every possible means to encourage the recruiting of new missionaries among their ranks.<sup>112</sup>

The desire to bring Catholicism to the far shores of the colonial empires went hand in hand with the missionaries' eagerness to free the native populations from the perceived chains of idolatry and the hold of Satan. America was believed to be infested by devils who had chased away all the angels after the fall of Adam and Eve. Going there was a way for the missionaries to prove they were ready to engage the forces of evil in battle, even if this meant sacrificing their own lives.<sup>113</sup> The words Francis Xavier wrote from Conchin to Simon Rodriguez in 1549 exemplify the inherent vocation to martyrdom felt by the Jesuit missionaries and help explain how it migrates from the realm of political action to that of the artistic product: "There is no better rest in this restless world than to face imminent peril or death solely for the love and service of God our Lord."<sup>114</sup> In carrying out their work in the colonies, the Jesuits faced persecution, torture, and death. Dozens of Jesuits were murdered during their missionary work and their violent ends appeared in truculent paintings of the time.<sup>115</sup> The gruesomeness of these deaths did not diminish the value of their work; on the contrary it added to their status, because it confirmed the firmness and strength of their faith.

Jean de Brébeuf, a French Jesuit who volunteered in 1625 to work among the Hurons in Quebec, exemplified the mystic desire felt by members of the Society of Jesus to suffer in a Christ-like fashion for the advancement of Catholicism in the colonies. In his letter "Important

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<sup>112</sup> "Jesuit identification with the apostles was more than hyperbole. Pérez de Ribas and other Jesuits who served in Nueva España all were volunteers who requested a missionary assignment. In so doing they consciously opted for a difficult life quite unlike the comfortable and secure life enjoyed by many priests in Spain." *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>113</sup> In his *Historia*, Pérez de Ribas states that "It is well known that the holy angels had once been frightened away from these nations, which were besieged and possessed by devils. When they see that these nations have become Christians, these divine ministers once more draw near and happily favor and accompany them." Pérez de Ribas, 373.

<sup>114</sup> Mitchell, *The Jesuits. A History*, 74.

<sup>115</sup> Wright, *God's Soldiers*, 129.

Advice to Those Whom It Shall Please God to Call to New France, Especially the Country of the Hurons,” written when Brébeuf returned to France for a brief period, he explained in detail the risks and privations involved in the missionary work in that region, but then delved into the value of enduring these sufferings.

...I bear a holy jealousy toward those who are already enduring all these sufferings; all these labors seem to me nothing, in comparison to what I am willing to endure for God; if I knew a place under heaven where there was yet more to be suffered, I would go there.” Ah, whoever you are to whom God gives these sentiments and this light, come, come, my dear brother, it is workmen such as you that we ask for here; it is to souls like yours that God has appointed the conquest of so many other souls whom the Devil holds yet in his power; apprehend no difficulties, -there will be none for you, since it is your whole consolation to see yourself crucified with the Son of God; silence will be sweet to you, since you have learned to commune with God, and to converse in the heavens with saints and angels ... What a satisfaction to pass these rapids, and to climb these rocks, to him who has before his eyes that loving savior, harassed by his tormentors and ascending Calvary laden with his Cross; the discomfort of the canoe is very easy to bear, to him who considers the crucified one. What a consolation! For I must use such terms, as otherwise I could not give you pleasure. What a consolation, then, to see oneself even abandoned on the road by the savages, languishing with sickness, or even dying with hunger in the woods, and of being able to say to God, “My God, it is to do your holy will that I am reduced to the state in which you see me.”<sup>116</sup>

It is interesting to notice how Brébeuf reiterated with vivid imagery the memory of Calvary and the cross Jesus carried. He argued that the sacrifice of the missionary is highlighted and exalted when put in comparison to the crucifixion of Jesus. He also stressed the performative nature of Christ’s death, which the missionary man could summon up as an iconic image every time he suffered for the glory of God or faced the rewarding experience of dying like Christ for the glory of God. Since the Church saw the human body as the battlefield between the forces of good and those of evil, relinquishing the body to martyrdom allowed the liberation of the divine nature of

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<sup>116</sup> John Patrick Donnelly, 125-126.

man and the negation of the corporeal. The body as a material object contaminated by the original sin of Adam and Eve regained value through the sufferings and death inflicted upon it. Jean de Brébeuf's mystic desire for martyrdom proved prophetic and his call was answered in 1649, when the Iroquois, which were waging war against the Hurons, burning and pillaging their villages, captured the Jesuit priest and, after torturing him, killed him and ate his heart.

The Society of Jesus capitalized on the martyrdom of its members by turning their deaths, and the relics of their bodies, into devotional material to be used during public and private ceremonies. The martyr's body parts, his blood, his bones, hair, and cloths were divided and stored with great care. The importance of relics as objects of worship became even more popular than it had been in the past because the Council of Trent not only approved of it, but strongly recommended it.<sup>117</sup> Ignatius of Loyola lists the worshipping of the relics as one of the eighteen rules to conform with the Church.<sup>118</sup>

Other relevant educational tools, inspired by Jesuit fascination with martyrdom, are the histories and chronicles that the missionaries composed to document their experiences in far away lands. Jean de Brébeuf's words were printed in the Jesuit Relations of 1636, a document that was published by the Society of Jesus and widely publicized to solicit support for the Jesuits' missionary work both inside and outside of the Society's boundaries. Pérez de Ribas wrote his *Historia* "both to attract newcomers to the missionary vocation and to inform Jesuits bound for the mission frontier," and focused his narrative on the many ordeals, sufferings, and spiritual challenges endured by his fellow priests.<sup>119</sup> The author dedicated special attention to the

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<sup>117</sup> "The holy bodies of holy martyrs ... are to be venerated by the faithful, for through these bodies many benefits are bestowed by God on men, so that they who affirm that veneration and honor are not due to the relics of the saint... are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned, and also now condemns them." *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12, 737.

<sup>118</sup> Antonio T. De Nicolas, 171.

<sup>119</sup> Andrés Pérez de Ribas, 4.

reasons and circumstances of the murder of the early missionaries, and exploited the dramatic context of these deaths by emphasizing the similarities between their sacrifice and that of Christ's.

He fashions emblematic scenes of the “dichosas muertes,” or joyful death, of his fellow missionaries at the hands of rebels and apostates, the recovery of their mutilated corpses and the miraculous events that resulted from them, into powerful textual icons, which like the *retablos* or altarscreens in the rough frontier churches the Jesuits were building, served fundamentally to promote the *Imitatio Christi*, or to show how the Jesuit Martyr's *vita* or *passio* (the accepted account of the suffering of the martyr) confirms his identity with Christ. The goal is not the mimesis of the natural world, but the mimesis of Christ.<sup>120</sup>

The dramatized stories of saints and martyrs were more than a means of encouragement for the missionaries who were already working in the uncharted territories of the colonies, and a source of inspiration for the urban clergy to volunteer to embark on the missionary adventure. They were also a very practical instrument used to instruct the aboriginals in the Christian doctrine, and to describe visually exemplifying narratives of the new faith.

In order to supplant native performances, the friars introduced missionary theatre shortly after the Conquest to use what they saw as the Amerindians' love of spectacle for evangelization. They hoped to affect indigenous belief systems (the what-they-know) by slightly tampering with the hows, or ways, of knowing. The plays developed by the friars and acted by native people set out to maintain native performance forms while transforming the content.<sup>121</sup>

Following in the path of both the Franciscans and the Dominicans, the Jesuits fully utilized the advantages offered by theatre in reaching directly to the imaginative nature of the

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<sup>120</sup> Maureen Ahern, “Visual and Verbal Sites: The Construction of Jesuit martyrdom in Northwest New Spain in Andres Perez de Ribas' *Historia de los Triumphos de nuestra Santa Fee* (1645),” *Colonial Latin American Review*, 8:1, 12.

<sup>121</sup> Diana Taylor, “Scenes of Cognition: Performance and Conquest,” *Theatre Journal* 56, no. 3 (October 2004): 369.

natives, and in spite of local governmental and papal restrictions of theatre, they were active in promoting theatre, dance, and music.<sup>122</sup> Theatrical presentations were used to commemorate a variety of activities beyond the *autos sacramentales*, such as official visits from important members of the government and the clergy, arrivals of relics, foundations of churches and colleges, and coronations. To celebrate the arrival of holy relics sent by Pope Gregory XIII, the Jesuits of Mexico organized a series of festivities in 1578 that spread over the course of eight days and included the representation of several *coloquios* (dialogued compositions with moral lessons) and of a five-act tragedy titled *El triunfo de los santos*. The play dealt with the cruel persecution of Christians under Diocletian, was collaboratively written, was acted by students of the local Jesuit college, used elaborate costumes, and portrayed historical and allegorical characters, together with martyrs of the Catholic canon. The presentation was repeated the day after because it was extremely successful and numerous natives attending the performance had converted immediately to Catholicism.<sup>123</sup>

The tenets of the Hermenegildo story were at the foundation of Jesuits' missionary work. Whether the Jesuits used Hermenegildo as an instrument to encourage their priests to practice the *imitatio Christi* and seek out the martyrdom in the missions, or as a visual means of persuasion for a community of natives watching a performance inspired by his story, this saint symbolized much of the ideology sustaining the work of the Society of Jesus in the colonial world.

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<sup>122</sup> "Although a court ruling in Mexico in 1574 called for censorship of *autos*, *comedia*, and other dramatic works, and the Third Church Council (1585) seemed to reinforce earlier restriction, in actuality enforcement was lax enough that performance of religious plays continued unabated." Felicia Hardison Londré and Daniel J. Watermeier, *The History of North American Theatre: The United States, Canada, and Mexico: From Pre-Columbian Times to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 47. For a more detailed account of the importance of music and arts in Jesuits' missions, see T. Frank Kennedy, "An Integrated Perspective: Music and Art in the Jesuit Reductions of Paraguay," in *The Jesuit Tradition in Education and Missions: a 450-Year Perspective*, edited by Christopher Chapple (London: Associated University Press, 1993), 215-225.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.



### 3.0 HERMENEGILDO IN SPAIN

#### 3.1 LA TRAGEDIA DE SAN HERMENEGILDO

The story of Hermenegildo was appealing to the Jesuits of Spain, especially the ones operating in Seville, for a number of practical reasons. Pope Sixto V had canonized Hermenegildo in 1585 allowing the liturgy in honor of Saint Hermenegildo only to Spain. However, the cult of the saint became widespread with Philip II who convinced Pope Urban VIII to extend his liturgy to all the Catholic countries.<sup>124</sup> The saint was also related inextricably to the history of Seville because the city was the site of his rebellion; his cult in Seville had developed enormously since the visit of Ambrosio de Morales in 1569; and the prison where Hermenegildo had been kept had been recently restored and turned into a chapel hosting a brotherhood bearing his name.<sup>125</sup> Philip IV also worshipped the saint and visited the Church displaying the *Apoteosis de San Hermenegildo* by Francisco Herrera the Father, specifically to look at the painting.<sup>126</sup>

In 1590, the staging of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* was the main event at the inauguration of a new building adjoined to the Jesuit college of San Hermenegildo in Seville.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> See Jesús Menéndez Peláez, *Los Jesuitas y el Teatro en el Siglo de Oro* (Universidad de Oviedo: Servicios de Publicaciones, 1995), 145.

<sup>125</sup> Ambrosio de Morales (1513-1591) was a popular historian, academic, and archeologist, and a good friend of King Philip II. He was commissioned for the writing of a general history of Spain, which Florián de Ocampo had started but left unfinished at the year 209 B.C.

<sup>126</sup> Antonio Álvarez-Osorio Alvariño, "Santo y rey. La corte de Felipe IV y la canonización de Fernando III," in *Homenaje a Henri Guerreiro*, 245.

<sup>127</sup> Julio Alonso Asenjo has recently reopened the debate over the date of the first performance of *La La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* suggesting that the correct one is January 25, 1591. For a full review of the debate, see Julio Alonso Asenjo, *La La La tragedia de San Hermenegildo y otras obras del Teatro Español de Colegio* (Seville: UNED, 1995)

It took ten years and 26,000 ducats to complete the building designed by Jesuit Juan Bautista Villalpando and consisting of “doce clases y un hermoso patio que espacia por cien pies de cuadro sin los quarto corredores que lo cercan de dieciséis pies de ancho,” according to Father Santibáñez.<sup>128</sup> Hispanic literature scholar Jesús Menéndez Peláez highlights that this representation was “teatro de circunstancias” in its intent to celebrate two facts of pivotal importance: the continuing presence of the Society of Jesus in Seville, and the public recognition of the many donors that had made the construction of the new buildings possible.

The pressure to impress the donors, especially the members of the *cabildo* of Seville who had been the major contributors, was equaled only by the necessity to display the exceptional quality of Jesuit education. The presence in the audience of the local nobility, religious authorities, and rich parents of the students made the stakes high for the writers of the tragedy, who wanted to display the newly acquired skills of their pupils.

Jesuit priests Hernando de Ávila and Melchor de la Selda, and Juan de Arguijo, a former student at the college of San Hermenegildo, collaborated to write *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, a work that was to become one of the very few landmarks of Jesuit theatre. De Ávila based the plot of the tragedy on Ambrosio de Morales’ *Crónica de España*.<sup>129</sup> Each one of the three dramatists wrote a separate section of the play. Hernando de Ávila, who wrote act I, II, V, and also the three acts of the *entretimiento* titled *Hércules, vencedor de la ignorancia*, carried most of the responsibilities related to the staging of the play because he was professor of

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<sup>128</sup> “...twelve classrooms and a beautiful patio that was one hundred feet long and seventeen feet wide.” J. Menéndez Peláez, 143.

<sup>129</sup> Julio Alonso Asenjo, “*La La La tragedia de San Hermenegildo: encrucijada de prácticas escénica y géneros dramáticos*,” in *I Gesuiti e i Primordi del Teatro barocco in Europa*, 202.

rhetoric in the college, thus also the director of the college theatrical performances. Melchor de la Cerda wrote all the Latin dialogues, and Juan de Argujo composed the third act.<sup>130</sup>

The Society of Jesus was not interested in historical accuracy, but in the rewriting of an historical episode within the ideological frame of the Counter Reformation. For this reason, the writers do not shy away from exerting their creativity with both the characterizations and the historical background. Playing with history, they unapologetically choose to “invent motives, to imagine psychological conflicts, or to expand upon details only hinted at in the extant versions of the story.”<sup>131</sup> The authors of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* overlooked the medieval chroniclers, and opted instead for Ambrosio de Morales’s chronicle, which follows Pope Gregory the Great’s devotional narrative and interprets Hermenegildo’s rebellion as an act of self-defense.<sup>132</sup> Ironically, the presence of Pope Gregory is manifested in the play itself through the character of the Cardinal, the messenger from Rome who explicitly assures Hermenegildo and Leandro of papal support.

### 3.1.1 Plot Description

*La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* reflects the challenges and limitations of the theatre that developed in the Jesuit colleges all over Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century. It is deeply indebted to medieval theatrical tradition, as it is evident in characters such as the Angel, the four Ladies, and the allegorical moral figures with whom Hermenegildo alternately interacts.

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<sup>130</sup> For a more detailed account of both the biographies of the dramatists and the events related to the inauguration, see Jesús Menéndez Peláez, 138-144.

<sup>131</sup> Michael J. Ruggiero, “History and Invention in *La La La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*,” *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Winter 1989), 199. (197-209)

<sup>132</sup> Julio Alonso Asenjo, 436-438.

It also echoes closely the mystery and morality plays and the well-established tradition of the *autos sacramentales*, the one-act plays staged during the festivities of the Corpus Christi. While the devotional and religious topics tackled by the Jesuit tragedy denote the Society of Jesus's preference for edifying subjects taken for the Bible or the lives of the saints and martyrs, it is important to note that Spanish Jesuit tragedy stands as a separate phenomenon because of the country where it was produced. In fact, Spanish drama took more time to develop into more secular forms, as in France and England, because of the predominant heritage of the Middle Ages and the strong presence of the Catholic Church in Spain.<sup>133</sup> While this is a characteristic visible in all of the dramatic works written and produced in the Jesuits' colleges throughout Europe, it is most evident in Spain where Ignatius de Loyola was born and where he founded in 1545 the Society of Jesus.<sup>134</sup>

Act I opens in the palace of Hermenegildo in Seville. Here, the Nuncio, the papal ambassador who has just arrived from the Vatican, talks to Hermenegildo about an alliance against his father Leovigildo, who is preparing to launch a persecution against the Catholics of the city. The Nuncio leaves after promising Hermenegildo the Pope's benediction and support. Hermenegildo talks to his counselors, Gosindo and Leodegario, and then meets with Hortensio, the Roman ambassador, who offers the prince the military support of the senate. Hermenegildo is undecided about what course of action to take because he is torn between the respect and the obedience he feels he owes to his father and the moral imperative to be faithful to God and the Church. Five allegorical figures, Faith, Constancy, Zeal, Fear, and Desire, appear in this first act and converse with Hermenegildo about the mission that is awaiting him.

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<sup>133</sup> See Watson J. – McKernie G., *A Cultural History of the Theatre* (New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1993), 141-143.

<sup>134</sup> See David Mitchell, *The Jesuits: A History* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1981), 22-46.

In the second act, Ingunda, Hermenegildo's Catholic wife, talks to four ladies, personifications of four principalities of the region, who express their thankfulness for having been converted to the Catholic religion. The major part of this act is dedicated to the debate between Leandro and Paschasio, the Arian bishop who represents Leovigildo's theological stance. The two characters engage in a theological argumentation to determine the true nature and substance of Christ. Leandro wins the debate and Hermenegildo feels reinforced in his faith. Recaredo tries to talk his brother into renouncing his faith, and asking for pardon from their father, but to no avail. At the end of the act, Hortensio offers Hermenegildo his military help to fight against the Arians in exchange for a large sum of money.

In act III, the setting switches from Hermenegildo's palace to a location outside Seville, as well as to the royal residence of Leovigildo. This act builds the suspense over the real possibility of having a civil war and raises the stakes for Hermenegildo's court and family. The Roman captains ask to keep Ingunda and her son hostage as a guarantee that Hermenegildo pay the money he promised. This act functions also as a transition from the intellectual and theological material of act II to the martial atmosphere of act IV. Hortensio and two Roman captains discuss their doubts about allying with Hermenegildo, while Recaredo, Hermenegildo's brother, tells Leovigildo that Hermenegildo is willing to go to war to defend his beliefs. At the end of this act Ingunda leaves the city with the Romans. Her farewell to Seville is one of the most affective and moving monologues in the play.

Act IV takes place outside Seville and starts with the betrayal of the Roman captains who make an alliance with Leovigildo and decide to fight against Hermenegildo. In return for their defection, Leovigildo pays them the thirty thousand escudos Hermenegildo had promised them. After a disastrous battle in which Seville's troops are destroyed, Hermenegildo is captured by

Recaredo, who again attempts to convince him to abjure his Trinitarian position. Given his refusal, Hermenegildo is put in prison.

In act V, Leovigildo offers Hermenegildo both freedom and forgiveness in exchange for his unconditional acceptance of the Arian heresy. Paschasio visits him in prison to administer to him the Holy Communion, the sign Leovigildo needs to be sure of Hermenegildo's change of heart towards Catholicism. Hermenegildo refuses the sacrament because he thinks Paschasio unworthy of touching the holy body of Christ due to his acceptance of the Arianistic heresy. In spite of the many attempts to convince him, Hermenegildo refuses to abide by his father's request. His determination increases even more when he is informed that Ingunda has died upon her arrival on the Libyan coast of "mal de ausencia," a condition caused by her being parted from her husband and missing him. At the end of the act, Leovigildo, after having tried for the umpteenth time to break Hermenegildo's faith, orders the death penalty be carried out. Sisberto unwillingly carries out the execution and beheads Hermenegildo, who dies kissing the crucifix. Finally, an angel announces the future conversion of Recaredo.

### **3.1.2 Performing dogmas**

In the crisis brought about by the Lutheran Reformation, Catholic dogmas, which constituted the very underpinning of the Church's existence, had come under attack. One of the functions of the Jesuit theatre was to bridge the gap between entertainment and education, and strengthen the Catholic Church's theological and political vision. Theatre gave the Jesuits the chance to discuss the relevance of dogmas, make them accessible to the masses, and reinforce and consolidate their

importance in Christians' daily worship. The issue of accessibility was key to the post Tridentine Church because one of the main accusations the Protestants had moved against the Vatican was its adoption of a complicated liturgy, which had alienated people from the true and simple message of the Gospel. Thanks to their skillful theatrical practice, the Jesuits managed to maintain the complexity of the dogmatic truths by exemplifying them in a dialogued form on stage. Nevertheless, they knew that in order to achieve their goal they needed more than a mere transposition of the college students' *disputatio* from the classroom to the theatre. The nature of their educational mission called for the full exploitation of all theatrical strategies that could lead to the audience's understanding of the lesson being taught. This could happen only as long as the spectators found the material interesting and stimulating, and could project their emotions onto it.

*La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* provided the Jesuits with a few challenges for three reasons: first, it dealt with the Trinity, the most obscure of dogmas; second, it asked the audience not only to understand the Trinitarian position of the Catholic Church but also to comprehend, and consequently reject, the Arianistic heresy; and, finally, it demanded that the audience understand the historical and ideological details of a debate that had happened a thousand years before. In order to simplify these tasks, Hernando de Ávila and his collaborators wove a few historical episodes into the narrative of act I to provide the spectators and readers with a working interpretive framework. Hermenegildo presents these references in a non-threatening, non-theological manner while discussing Leovigildo's conniving strategies. He mentions the Council of Toledo of 580, which Leovigildo had called to settle the controversies raised by the Catholic Trinitarians. He also refers to Leovigildo's strategic decision to declare a second baptism

unnecessary for the Catholics who wanted to convert to Arianism.<sup>135</sup> Hermenegildo relates this historical information in a simple manner, which helped to make the threat of Arianism a reality, and created a sense of urgency and immediacy for the war that is about to ensue. He mentions the Council of Toledo and the abolishment of a second baptism as tactics used by his father to steal Hermenegildo's allies, who might have been willing to convert to Arianism because they were no longer forced to endure rebaptism. Thus, the authors of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* are successful in providing the necessary historical and theological background without alienating the audience with too difficult a subject matter.

The Jesuits intended to further simplify the task of explaining the dogma of the Trinity through the introduction of visual images that the spectators could relate to, either because they had seen them, or they had heard about them before. For instance, in act I, scene 2, Hermenegildo introduces the topic of the Trinity using one of the best-known iconographic depictions of it, that of a scepter with three crowns.<sup>136</sup> In another occasion, the allegorical character of Faith uses the sacrament of the Eucharist in order to explain the significance and

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<sup>135</sup> “Lo que agora me causa mayor miedo / Es la secreta y peligrosa mina / Del concilio de obispos, que en Toledo / Juntar el rey mi padre determina; / Y, para que salgamos deste enredo, / Es necesario usar de contramina; / Y aun entiendo, sería conveniente / Que os hallaseis, Leandro, en él presente. / Que, al fin, es de importancia la presencia / Del que con argumentos y razones / Podrá hazerles tanta resistencia / Que convença sus duros coraçones; / Porque ha crecido tanto la insolencia, / Que pretenden con nueva invenciones / Condennar su arriano rebaptismo / Para así pervertir al Christianismo.” (“What worries me the most is the secret and dangerous mine presented by the council of the bishops that my father has called in Toledo. In order to escape this complicated affair we have to use a counter mine. It would be most useful if you, Leandro, were present so that you can resist them and convince their hard hearts with your arguments and reasoning. This is important because their insolence has grown to the point that now they condemn the Arian baptism with new rules with the only purpose to pervert the Christian religion.”) *TSH*, 186-187.

<sup>136</sup> “Rayaste, señor, la cumber / De mi entendimiento aviesso; / Y, pues par aver mi exceso / No me negaste tu lumber, / Tu divinidad confieso. / Y firme en esta verdad / Conosco la Trinidad / De tus divinas personas / Con un sceptro y tres corona / En una misma igualdad.” (“Lord, you you scratched the peak of my evil judgement and with your light you showed me my mistake and now I understand your divinity. Confirmed in this truth, I now know the Trinity of your divine and equal persons represented by one scepter and three crowns.”) Jesús Menéndez Peláez, 188-189.



presence of the Trinity in the Holy Communion.<sup>137</sup> These techniques facilitated the comprehension of the Trinity because they expanded its epistemological potential, and highlighted its applicability and presence in a variety of human and theological experiences.

While the Trinitarian theology permeates the entire tragedy, it is in the second act that this dogma receives its fullest attention. Because of the nature of the material addressed in this section, act II lacks some of the dramatic action found in the other acts, and strikes the reader as the most static. However, the beginning of scene 2 and 3 of act II illustrates how Hernando de Ávila and his collaborators resolve the issue of presenting a theological subject in an entertaining fashion and succeed in their intent of *delectare et docere*. These scenes also shed light on the performative and linguistic strategies the playwrights utilize to enhance the potential of the dramatic dialogue between Leandro and Paschasio.

The lengthy stage directions preceding those scenes indicate the relevance the authors attributed to this scene in shaping the moral and theological issues of the play, as well as explaining the reason for the war between Hermenegildo and his father. It is clear that there is more to the playwrights' agenda than merely dramaturgical and religious objectives. What is at stake is the 'form' through which their goals were to be achieved and ultimately the effect it would have on the audience's feelings and response. This was obviously a priority, given that this scene was written and performed in Latin and that the topic itself was complex and laden with difficult theological concepts.<sup>138</sup> In fact, this scene compares and contrasts passages from the Bible with commentaries compiled by the Fathers of the Church in order to illustrate the two

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<sup>137</sup> Esto es: una fe que puede / En un divino amassijo / Confesar al Padre y Hijo / Y al que de las dos procede." ("It boils down to this: one faith that can confess in a divine mix the Father, the Son, and the one that originates from the both of them.") Ibid., 220.

<sup>138</sup> The third language that appears in *San Hermenegildo* is Italian, spoken by the Roman captains in act IV. Latin also reappears in act IV during a conversation between Leovigildo and Hortensio. In this case, an interpreter translates for Leovigildo into Spanish.

opponents' positions: Leandro sustains the theological authorities of the patristic philosophy, while Paschasio claims that the Bible is the only authoritative source. The characters' dialectical struggle would have helped clarify for the audience the analogy between Paschasio and the heretic Protestants, who claimed the preeminence of the Bible over the writings of the Fathers of the Church.

The authors rely on visual elements to enhance the audience's enjoyment and ease their understanding of the material. This is clear in the highly ceremonial staging of the scene. The stage directions detail the sequence of the characters' entrances and exits, the relation between the performers' movements and the spoken texts, as well as their precise body positions and actions. This is clear in the stage directions at the top of scene 3 of act II which describes the arrival of the guests and their greeting of Hermenegildo and Ingunda:

Entran primero Gosindo y Leodegario acompañando al Príncipe Recaredo y al Arçobispo Leandro y al cardinal Legado y al Obispo Pascasio ereje que venían a la disputa; tras ellos venía un secretario para escrevir los autos della. El rey Ermenegildo los salió a recibir algunos pasos; el Príncipe Recaredo, puesto enfrente de su hermano y cuñada, abraçó primero a su hermano diziendo el primer verso, a quien Ermenegildo abraçando respondió con los dos siguientes y luego haziendo una cortés reverencia a la Reyna y prosiguiendo con el quarto verso acometió a besarle las manos; ello haziendo, la otra hechó los braços sobre los hombros diziendo el verso 6 como sigue.<sup>139</sup>

At the beginning of scene 4, after the introductions and greetings, the characters start taking their seats for the theological dispute:

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<sup>139</sup> Gosindo and Leodegario entered first, accompanying prince Recaredo, Archbishop Leandro, the Cardinal, and heretic Bishop Pascasio who came for the debate; after them a secretary arrived to write down the acts of the debate. King Ermenegildo moved a few steps forward to receive them; prince Recaredo, standing in front of his brother and sister-in-law, embraced his brother first while speaking the first verse, and Ermenegildo responded with the following two while embracing him back. Then Recaredo did a gesture of reverence to the queen and delivering the fourth verse kissed her hand; after he did this, she put her arms on his shoulder and said verse six as followed.

Las sillas para la disputa se pusieron por este orden: en la primera frente del teatro estaban dos sillas de brocade, donde se sentó Ermenegildo y Ingunda, y, a su mano derecha, el principito, hijo de San Ermenegildo, estaba en pie al lado de su madre. Y al lado de Ingunda se sentó Recaredo en una silla de terciopelo carmesí y en otra semejante el Cardinal del lado de Ermenegildo. En medio del teatro se puso una media sillita apartada de los demás asientos y como cuarto o cinco pasos hazia la parte del Cardenal, en la qual se asentó S. Leandro y en otra enfrente se asentó el Obispo Pascasio. Al otro lado estaba el Secretario con un bufete de plata delante sobre que escribía. La Fe estaba en pie al lado derecho de S. Leandro, y la Constancia al otro lado; el Deseo junto a San Ermenegildo; un poco atras las damas arrimadas al muro, puestas en ala. Gosindo y Leodegario delante de todos em pie sobre sus espadas, afirmados y cubiertos, y estando todos con grandíssima suspension; el Cardenal legado entabló la disputa diziendo...<sup>140</sup>

The authors of *San Hermenegildo* describe the setting meticulously, to the point of specifying the fabrics used to upholster the chairs where the characters are sitting. Even more importantly, they get very specific in illustrating the physical positions of every character on stage. Hermenegildo, his wife Ingunda, and their child take center stage while all the other characters position themselves according to their royal ranking, as well as to their involvement in the rhetorical battle that is about to begin. Therefore, we have Recaredo, Hermenegildo's brother, sitting next to Ingunda in a position that is still very much that of a prince at a royal audience. However, it is the Cardinal, who has come from Rome to sort out the dispute between Catholics and Arians, who occupies the seat beside Hermenegildo. This reinforces the importance of Catholicism in Hermenegildo's life, since the right side is the one reserved for the favorite (as the Bible says Jesus sits at the right of his Father). Placing the Cardinal to the right of

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<sup>140</sup> The chairs for the debate were arranged in this order: two chairs of brocade were placed in front of the audience, and Hermenegildo and Ingunda sat on them; to their left the little prince, son of Ermenegildo, stood next to his mother. Recaredo sat to Ingunda's side on a red velvet chair, and the Cardinal sat on a similar chair next to Ermenegildo. They placed a chair without a back in the middle of the theatre, four or five steps away from the others, on the side of the Cardinal where Leandro sat. Pascasio sat on a similar chair in front of Leandro. On the other side there was the secretary with a movable silver secretaire where he wrote. Faith stood on the right side of saint Leandro, and Constance to his left. Desire stood next to saint Ermenegildo. Behind, a bit removed, the ladies-in-waiting wait by the wall. Gosindo and Leodegario stood firmly, armed with swords and with their heads covered. Everybody attended with gravity. The Cardinal began the debate saying...*TSH*, 230, 234.

Hermenegildo signifies the role of Catholicism in guiding the Visigoth prince in his choices.<sup>141</sup> The allegorical characters of Faith and Constancy stand beside Leandro to provide the guidance and strength needed to win the argument, and they represent both the religious and moral qualities to which a Jesuit must aspire to bear witness to the word of God. The fact that Paschasio does not have anyone supporting him signifies his inferior theological standpoint, one that cannot be backed up either by the official church or by the biblical doctrine. The character of Desire stands directly beside Hermenegildo, which speaks to the will and eagerness of the royal prince to fight for Catholicism. The four Ladies watching the debate from the side of the stage, quite close to the wing, are ladies in attendance of Ingunda, but in reality they represent the four principalities of the state that had adhered and converted to Catholicism (Sevilla, Carmona, Cazalla, and Axarafe). Their appearance draws attention to Seville as the geographical and historical site of the debate, and renovates the urgency of fighting religious unorthodoxy in contemporary Seville. The four Ladies foreshadow the oncoming war and create a sense of ominous expectation in the audience, as do Gosindo and Leodegario, members of Hermenegildo's council, who appear fully armed and in a state of apprehension. The stage directions and their emphasis of visual elements contain clear parallels with Renaissance painting of royalty, where the position of the 'subjects' on the canvas accounts for their socio-political hierarchy.

There are fourteen characters in this scene, and they are all gazing at two other characters, Leandro and Paschasio. 'Gaze' is a key term in understanding the subtle intellectual operation at work in this second act, as it points out the purposeful functionality of the visual elements and their role in structuring emotional responses. First, one has to picture the

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<sup>141</sup> Hierarchy and definition of social roles were ingrained in the administration of the Jesuit colleges and could count on a comprehensive bureaucratic system. See Gualtiero Gnerchi, *La Ratio Studiorum. Modelli Culturali e Pratiche Educative dei Gesuiti in Italia tra Cinquecento e Seicento* (Roma, Bulzoni, 1981), 38.

assembling of this powerful *tableaux vivant* as an audience member would have experienced it in 1590. The historian must assume that it would have happened in an ordered, almost ritualistic manner, as it was customary with royal audiences and gatherings. The characters, dressed in lavish costumes, would have walked on stage one by one, and sat or stood in their respective positions according to their ranks. Hermenegildo and his family would have been the last ones to sit down because princes and kings need an audience for their entrance. The audience in the theatre would have recognized each character as they made their way onto the stage, and would have been anxiously anticipating the moment when Leandro, the Catholic paladin, and Paschasio, the demonic Arian bishop, would make their entrances. Once the debate started, the theatre audience would be engaged in a metatheatrical event, watching two actors performing the argument for the onstage audience, made up of Hermenegildo and his court. Due to the sitting arrangement of the auditorium and the blocking of this scene, the spectators in the courtyard would have locked eyes with the royal audience onstage, and consequently, they would feel engaged in a game of reciprocal scrutiny. These ‘two’ audiences would have focused on the showdown between Leandro and Paschasio while keeping in their respective field visions the other audience, which was also in front of them. The mirroring at work in this moment is highly effective because it transcends the boundaries existing between stage and auditorium, and equates the role and the mission of the actors to those of the spectators. Both the characters and the spectators witnessing the debate must choose between the two theological expositions; no neutrality or middle ground is allowed in the uncompromising world represented in act II. Everybody attending the performance had to decide whether to support Paschasio (Pienso luego mostrar a vuestra alteza / Muy claramente cómo a Jesu Christo / Darle divinidad es gran rudeza) or Leandro (Defenderé la Fe de uno y trino, / Mostrando sola ser la verdadera.)<sup>142</sup> The consensus

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<sup>142</sup> “I will show Your Highness how it is wrong to attribute divinity to Jesus Christ”; “I will defend the faith of one

for Leandro is built both in the narrative construction of his argument, as well as in the staging of the scene. The playwrights highlighted his righteousness through the blocking of the scene and his position among the key characters of the story. Moreover, they enhance Leandro's superiority by displaying Paschasio's undignified behavior at the end of the debate when he loses his temper and storms out of the room. The stage direction says "Aquí se levanta Paschasio muy alborotado dando voces" ("at this point Paschasio gets up being very upset and raising his voice"), thus stressing the uncontrollable and disruptive behavior of the heretical priest who cannot tolerate having lost the theological duel. The fact that Hermenegildo is pleading with Paschasio to be reasonable while the priest was probably shouting and gesticulating turned the scene into a public humiliation of the heretic priest who is portrayed as irrational and unable to control himself.

The emotional end of the scene with its highly physical characterization surely helped clarify the outcome of the debate for the spectators and fixed in their mind the moral victory of Leandro. The relevance of visual stimuli and their rhetorical applicability to *movere* the audience emotionally is also evident in the language employed in this scene. The sacred rhetoric in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reevaluates the role of emotions in touching the heart of people and moving them to act.

Affectivity, instead of being an irrational perturbation, thus moves into the center of spiritual experience. The Renaissance appropriates Augustine's psychology for rhetorical theory, restoring the connection between the emotions and rhetoric that is fundamental to Aristotle but thereafter largely abandoned.<sup>143</sup>

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in three, proving it to be the only truth." *TSH*, 233.

<sup>143</sup> Shuger, D. K. "The Philosophical Foundations of Sacred Rhetoric," in Jost, W.-Plmsted, W. *Rhetorical Invention & Religious Inquiry. New Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, 52, 53.

Scene 2 of act II successfully employs visual elements and an exaggerated body language to teach a difficult lesson in theology and reach everybody in the audience. The authors of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* are aware of the scene's dramatic flaws, most especially that it is devoid of any action and relies on a language that only few people in the audience could understand. In spite of the inherent challenges it presented, this scene was absolutely essential to the play because it provided the students in the audience, as well as those on stage, with the chance to hear and practice their Latin, and exposed them to the rhetorical and oratorical skills they had studied in class. This scene reaffirmed the dogma of the Trinity by offering an in-depth investigation of the consubstantial nature of God and Jesus.

Since the scene is pivotal to the theological and educational goals of the Jesuits, the authors worked not only with the staging, but also with the language to heighten its dramatic potential. A viable way out of the dramaturgical *impasse* presented by this particularly problematic scene is to be found in the idiom and its most efficient use for the stage. It is interesting to notice the analogies used by the Cardinal in introducing the debate. After restating his role as representative of the Roman Pope and introducing the topic in quite clear terms, he equates the debate with a contest taking place in an arena (“Eia igitur descendite in arenam”). This image unequivocally conjures up bullfighting and toreadors and propels what would have been a highly structured intellectual debate into a world where a solitary man fights for his life against a beast-like and powerful enemy.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, the Nuncio compares the arguments brought up by the opponents in the discussion to darts, infusing them with an agency and a sense of danger one does not associate with words. The duel is an ordered and ruled by a strict

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<sup>144</sup> “Caussin’s martial imagery associates verbal power with spiritual combat, with the agon of Christian existence, not with the speaker’s own aggressive designs on his audience. The sacred orator, unlike the sophist, does not fight for victory but against sin.” Shuger 50.

etiquette. At the command of the Cardinal/Nuncio the opponents prepare for the battle and while Paschasio charges first, Leandro defends himself, waiting for his time to pass to the offensive.

The abundant metaphors and analogies are more than mere illustrative strategies, they provide an emotional and aesthetical filter that allows the audience to experience the message in the text in a variety of ways. They engage different sensory reactions, contribute to structure and shape the audience's responses strongly and more effectively.<sup>145</sup> A dry discussion about the dogma of the Trinity was not sufficient to engage and compel the audience. In the *Institutio Oratoria*, one of the canonical texts in the Jesuits' oratory classes, Quintilian discusses this concept in clear terms.

Oratory fails of its full effect, and does not assert itself as it should, if its appeal is merely to the hearing, and if the judge merely feels that the facts on which he was to give his decision are being narrated to him and not displayed in their living truth to the eyes of the mind.<sup>146</sup>

By creating lasting visual images in the mind of the spectator, figures of speech amplify the power of suggestion of the language, stimulate and maintain interest, and consolidate the theological lessons of the play. Metaphors are not the only devices used to embellish the writing of a religious drama that deals with dogmas. The tragedy *San Hermenegildo* adopts many figures of speech to heighten the emotional response of the audience and make the material performed more appealing to seminarians and lay spectators.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> See Brooks, C.-Warren R.P. *Modern Rhetoric*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970, 435-436.

<sup>146</sup> Quintilian. *Institutio Oratoria*, VIII.iii.62. Cited in Happel Stephen. "Picturing God: The Rhetoric of Religious Images and Caravaggio's *Conversion of Saint Paul*," in Jost, W.-Olmsted, W. *Rhetorical Invention & Religious Inquiry. New Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, 323.

<sup>147</sup> Scholarly research about the linguistic ways in which *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* achieves its visual effects is surely a topic that will eventually interest someone working in the field of Spanish literature, or Hispanic linguistics.



It is also important to notice how the writers of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* eliminated the confusion that might have ensued from rapid scene changes and shifts in time and locale by clearly scripting in the written text both geographical locations and time durations. In order to clarify where and when the scene took place, the characters address these issues in the dialogue. Language and its metaphorical use, together with effective scene writing, were enough to create the illusion of reality for a crowd of spectators that was used to seeing the world in a theatrical manner. The text was key to delivering the spiritual content of the story, as well as to clarifying place and time; however, this does not mean in any way that the Jesuit choragus saw the spoken word as the main tenet of a successful play. On the contrary, the Jesuit play relied heavily on the use of imagery and visual strategies to engage, and facilitate, the audience's understanding of the doctrinal message of the text. The multiplication of allegorical figures, the "Personifications of ideas, attitudes, desires," and the widespread depiction of supernatural creatures such as "ghosts, angels, devils, and the spirits of the dead" made this evident<sup>148</sup> The Society of Jesus was aware of Horace's recommendation to instruct and entertain the viewer, and made it an essential guideline of their curricula. Both in the classroom and in the theatre.

### **3.1.3 Seville in *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* and in the Entertainment *Hércules vencedor de la ignorancia***

There was more to the staging of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* than the mere celebration of the enlargement of the Jesuit college in Seville. The expectations surrounding this moment were multilayered and complex, and can be better understood in the context of the conventions of the

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<sup>148</sup> Schnitzler, 286.

Spanish theatre of the Golden Age. In his seminal study on baroque culture and theatre, José Antonio Maravall clarifies the propagandistic nature of all Golden Age artistic and cultural manifestations:

Si los productos de la cultura del barroco, no solo en España, sino en Francia y en otros países, coinciden en algunos de esos caracteres –por ejemplo, su inclinación modernista-, ello se debe, por de pronto, a que la cultura del Barroco, en todas sus manifestaciones –en teatro, como en pintura, como en política, etc.- está condicionada por los objetivos propagandísticos que le son propios. En un obra mía, publicada hace ya bastante años, hice observar que los escritores barrocos –moralistas, políticos, etc.- acudían a técnicas de captación extrarracional (por tanto, a procedimientos que hemos de reconocer de naturaleza masiva y propagandística), para imprimir en las mentes ciertas creencias: de ahí la utilización de los emblemas y otros elementos plásticos.<sup>149</sup>

The Jesuits embraced the culture of political and religious propaganda of the Baroque and therefore turned the staging of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* into a celebratory moment for the order itself and its many achievements. The tragedy was a celebration of the new buildings as much as it was a memorialization of the Society of Jesus, its presence in Seville, its educational purpose and successes, its power to influence the future of Spain through the students graduating from its schools, and, ultimately, its strength and longevity in spite of hard criticism. At the same time, this play opened up to the social collectivity in a variety of ways. It presented an inclusive structure where the physical presence of lay nobility, local authorities, and wealthy patrons was reinforced by seating arrangements displaying social and class roles. It also made sure to

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<sup>149</sup> “The fact that the cultural products of the Baroque coincide in some of their traits not only in Spain but in France as well (for instance, in their modernist inclination), is due to the propagandistic objectives that characterize Baroque culture, and that condition all its manifestations: theatre, painting, and politics. In a book I published a few years ago, I observed how baroque writers (moralist, political, etc.) adopted techniques that went beyond the rational sphere, such as processes of mass and propagandistic nature, in order to impress on the mind certain beliefs. This explains the use of emblems and other plastic elements.” José Antonio Maravall, *Teatro y literatura en la sociedad barroca* (Madrid: Seminarios y Ediciones, 1972), 25.

commemorate Seville as the site of the civil war between Hermenegildo and Leovigildo by addressing the prestige the city acquired through its connection to Hermenegildo.

Seville was at the time the main port of Spain, and the one that, more than any other, dealt with the traffic coming from the colonies of the Americas. The city's intricate relationship with the new world is exemplified by the Archivo General de las Indias, an impressively large archive containing all the documents related to Spain's colonial possessions. Fernando de Herrera names Seville "Reina del grande océano dichosa, / sin quien a España falta la grandeza," emphasizing the oceanic destiny of the city and its role in the grandness of Spain.<sup>150</sup> It was the rich, prestigious city with a prominent past and glorious future that the Society of Jesus wanted to celebrate in the abundant *captatio benevolentiae* moments in the play.

Seville permeates *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* with four allegorical characters symbolizing the city's districts. It is physically epitomized by the huge monumental door representing the entrance to the city, and two towers, one used as Hermenegildo's prison, the other utilized in the *entretenimiento* as the prison where Science is held captive. The presence of the city is also established through the words and dialogues of the characters, which place the dignity of Seville in relationship to the martyrdom of the saint, and to his indefatigable defense of Catholicism.

*Hércules, vencedor de la ignorancia*, the *entretenimiento* (Entertainment) that separated the first three acts of the tragedy, is also pivotal in singing the many praises of Seville. Menéndez Peláez equates the *entretenimiento*, or *action intercalaris*, of religious plays with the *entremes* of secular theatre because they both provided comedic or spectacular break from the often dramatic

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<sup>150</sup> "The lucky queen of the great ocean, without which Spain would lack its greatness." Quoted in Julio Alonso Asenjo, 447.

content of the main piece.<sup>151</sup> While there is evidence that, at least in a few instances, intermission acts were avoided in the *autos sacramentales* for the celebration of the Corpus Christi because religious authorities viewed them as too secular and profane for the religious tone of the festivity, in the case of the 1590 performance of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* this was not a problem because the *entretenimiento* was also written by the author of the tragedy and was ideologically linked to it.<sup>152</sup> It intended to celebrate the central role of Seville by establishing its legendary foundation, and it aimed at mirroring the didactic role of the college of San Hermenegildo with Hercules's triumph over Ignorance. The *entretenimiento* exalts the mythological legend according to which Hercules founded Seville, and it follows the convention, common during the Renaissance and Baroque era, to ascribe the origin of important cities to Greek heroes because of the prestige classic culture held during these time periods. Julio Alonso Asenjo views Hermenegildo and Hercules as symbols of Seville, and associates *la ciencia* or *la sabiduría* (science or knowledge) portrayed in the *entretenimiento* with the Society of Jesus's activity in the city. According to Asenjo, the pair Hermenegildo/Hercules functions as father of the city, while the Society of Jesus represents the mother:

Y, aderezado con las burlas, o entre bromas y versa, en el Entretenimiento tendremos también la honra a la madre de los estudiantes, la Ciencia o Sabiduría, que son los profesores (los que *paren* la ciencia: la Compañía de Jesús), y a quienes concede su apoyo Hércules, que simboliza (como también Hermenegildo) a la ciudad de Sevilla, representada por sus Cabildos y Autoridades ... Gloria a la Ciencia-Compañía y Gloria a Hércules/Hermenegildo-Sevilla: ambas, Compañía de Jesús y Sevilla, quedan indisociablemente unidas, en el espectáculo y en la memoria.”<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> J. Menéndez Peláez, 375.

<sup>152</sup> Justo Fernández Oblanca, *Literatura y sociedad en los entremeses del siglo seventeenth* (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo Servicio de Publicaciones), 56

<sup>153</sup> “Spiced up with mockery, jokes, and verses, the Entertainment honors the mother of the students Science or Knowledge, who represents the professors, the ones who give birth to Science (the Society of Jesus). Those are the people helped by Hercules. Like Hermenegildo, Hercules symbolizes Seville, the city that is represented through its district council and authorities ... Glory to Science/Society of Jesus and glory to Hercules/Hermenegildo: both the

The tragedy and the *entretenimiento* work synoptically to create a profound liaison between the Society of Jesus and the city that hosts its college. The Jesuits inscribe their presence into the connective and structural texture of Seville by manufacturing analogical connections in both the tragedy and the *entretenimiento* in order to reinforce their religious and educational affiliations with the city. At the end of the third act, Hercules, as a symbol of Seville, exclaims “Que oi más será mi reino más glorioso / Pues que os tengo por prenda de mi Gloria,” ascribing his glory to his association with Sciencia, the educational power of The Society of Jesus clearly symbolized by the college and its new buildings.<sup>154</sup> Then he leads Sciencia “A tomar possession de vuestra silla” (“to take possession of your chair”), portraying a moment that clearly resembles a coronation of sorts as Sciencia firmly establishes herself in Seville by sitting on the chair that represents the city.<sup>155</sup>

The author described the bond between the Andalusian city and the Jesuits as strong and unbreakable, and he does not shy away from addressing the criticism that had been moved against it by the detractors of the Society of Jesus. In act III, after Hercules has killed a dragon that threatened to murder Sciencia and Hercules himself, Sciencia mentions the evil lies spread by people that oppose the relationship between Hercules and Seville, and suggests that all the teeth of the dragon, symbols of those lies, should be removed from the creature’s mouth:

Y en la obra que avéis hecho  
Largamente avéis mostrado  
El poder de vuestro estado  
Y el valor de vuestro pecho

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Society of Jesus and Seville are indissolubly bound in the theatrical representation as well as its memory.” Julio Alonso Asenjo, 447.

<sup>154</sup> “Today my kingdom will be even more glorious because I have you as a prisoner of my glory.” *TSH*, 431.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

Mas, aunque la causa es tal  
Y se juzga por tan digna,  
Que el sabio obligue e inclina  
A una alabanza immortal.

Mas los ánimos se curan,  
Porque ai gente maldizientes,  
Que con imbidiosos dientes  
Esto que hazéis murmuran.

Y assí a los dos nos conviene  
Que esse dragón importuno  
Le saquéis uno por uno  
Todos los dientes que tiene<sup>156</sup>

After the gruesome ritual is over, they throw the teeth onto the ground and they immediately transform into six children who make their way on stage using six different trap doors. The children appear threatening because they are armed with swords, however, after a brief choreographed dance, they attack and kill each other, finally disappearing through the trap doors. This scene illustrated the strength of the relationship existing between Seville and the Jesuits, as well as the communal front they posed against their enemies.

#### **3.1.4 Staging and the imperative of *movere***

*La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* took place in the courtyard of the college of San Hermenegildo, where the stage was placed on one of the two sides which had porticos. The stage was a large quadrangular platform, 1.95 meters high, and 11 square meters in dimension, and it

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<sup>156</sup> “Whay you have accomplished proves beyond doubt both your power and valor. The wise man must praise you for fighting for such noble cause. Nevertheless, there are souls that worry because there are evil-mouthed people who, with envious teeth, criticize behind your back what you have done. So I think it is better if we pull out all the teeth of this inconvenient dragon, one by one.” *TSH*, 428.

had trap doors in the stage floor to allow the fast disappearance of the gypsy kids in *Hércules, vencedor de la ignorancia*. The set was quite simple considering the standards of the time. The central section of the stage was occupied by a large door representing the entrance to Seville. The door could signify at different times either the interior of the city where Hermenegildo and his court reside, or the exterior where Leovigildo and his troops await, and the Roman captains hatch their treasonous plan. The neutrality of this space would have been accepted by the audience because of their familiarity with its conventions:

Por ello, a este público o al más popular, adicto a los grandes espectáculos el Corpus sevillano, no le resultaría en absolute difícil aceptar esa convención del espacio ‘neutral’ en la boca del escenario, que sirve para señalar cualquier emplazamiento, y que en este caso se especifica mediante el punto y vía de procedencia del personaje.<sup>157</sup>

The frontispiece of the monumental door displayed the sign S.P.Q.H.A. (*Senatus Populus Que Hispalensis*) to clarify where the action took place. The door had a curtain that would hide the actors who were preparing for their entrance and, to its sides, there were two other doors that, according to Alonso Asenjo, were just painted and not accessible. To the left of the central door there was a tower representing the prison where Hermenegildo is kept in act V. The tower had a door that gave access to the top level of the building where the Angel delivers his monologue to Seville. Another tower, mirroring the one on the left, occupied the right side of the stage and it was used during the entertainment as the prison where the character of Scientia is held prisoner. Since the most spectacular effects took place at the end of the intermission act, this tower opened

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<sup>157</sup> “As this popular audience was accostumed to the spectacular events of Seville Corpus Christi, it was not difficult for them to accept the convention of neutral space of the stage door, which could signal all locations and was specifically localized by the position and point of departure of the characters.” J. Alonso Asenjo, 451.

up at the end of *Hércules, vencedor de la ignorancia* to portray Hercules freeing Scientia.<sup>158</sup> Armando Garzon-Blanco maintains that the towers were not placed at the very edges of the stage so that the actors could use the remaining space to enter and exit, and that canvases representing the city walls occupied the space between the towers and the central door.<sup>159</sup> He also suggests that the towers had “three different levels, the first corresponding to the doors, the second to the windows, and the third to the uppermost section of the structure.”<sup>160</sup> The multilevel and vertical structure of the towers created a counterbalance to the horizontal lines of the stage floor and the passageway connecting the two towers and the top of the monumental door.

Even though the stage design consisted only of three principal indicators (the two towers and the central door), the audience would have easily understood that taking a few steps could signify moving immense distances, and that the passing of a few minutes could mean that many years had gone by in the world of the play. Realism was hardly a concern because both audiences and theatre practitioners shared and understood the same conventions in staging plays. The audience attending the Jesuit theatre was the same one for the Golden age *comedia*, and it was accustomed to assuming a proactive role in co-constructing the spatial and temporal coordinates of the play by deciphering the textual and directorial clues embedded in the performance. William Egginton addresses the notion of spectators’ co-authorship, noting how the Spanish theatre was highly flexible in simultaneously accommodating an abstract and realistic point of view. He discusses how this theatre practice flattened out the multiple locales of any given play,

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<sup>158</sup> “Esta construcción varió su aspecto al final de la representación del Entretenimiento. En ese momento, para permitir que la Ciencia descienda de su torre prisión al centro del escenario, debía descubrirse una escalera y grutas de hiedra y arrayán, hasta entonces cubiertas por un lienzo pintados y suspendido.” (“This building changed at the end of the entertainment. At this point, in order to allow Science to exit its prison and move to the center of the stage, it must have disclosed stairs and caves of ivy and myrtle represented by a painted and suspended cloth.”) *Ibid.*, 449.

<sup>159</sup> Armando Garzon-Blanco, *The Inaugural Production of the Spanish Jesuit La La tragedia de San Hermenegildo, Seville, 1590*, Dissertation, (Ann Arbor, 1977), 63.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 61



and instead highlighted a few sites, which suggested to the audience the presence of reality within the abstraction of the stage space.

The impact of the medieval device still exists, but now in the form of localized pockets of presence rather than as all-pervading full space. These pockets of presence became the “real” anchor of the protean stage; they are the place of hard materiality, the breakdown of interpretation, the locale of magic and miracles and, for this reason may aptly retain the name of their origin, the crypt.<sup>161</sup>

The two towers and the monumental door of the *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* were the signifiers that attached the story to historical and geographical reality. While the rest of the playing area is abstract and malleable enough to become many things at once, those structural elements anchor the plot to its theological agenda. In fact, the tower hosting the prison of Hermenegildo is at once the place of the inescapability of his mortality and of his celestial destiny. It is on the top of the tower that the Angel emerges to announce the conversion of Recaredo and it is at the bottom of it that Hermenegildo is beheaded. The tower is imbued with the notion that death and eternal life partake of the same reality, and that heaven cannot be gained without the sacrifice of one’s own life. The fact that the tower is realistically portrayed speaks to the importance it held for the Jesuits as a visual aid to fix the main ideological tenets of the play, which were the sacrifice and sanctification of Hermenegildo.

*Hércules vencedor de la ignorancia* displays the same symbolic intent in the tower where Scientia is held prisoner. At the end of the Entertainment Hercules frees Scientia and the painted canvas falls to disclose Scientia coming down the stairs dressed in beautiful clothes. Both works associate the endurance of pain and privations with the enjoyment of lasting rewards, and they

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<sup>161</sup> William Igginton, *How the World Became a Stage: Presence, Theatricality, and the Question of Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 108.

both speak to the sacrificial ideology that permeated the theological *milieu* of the Society of Jesus.

The lights were also important and the production could count on daylight for most of its running time. However, it is possible that the last act might have been lit by candlelight, considering that it was staged in January, and that the play and the *entretenimiento* together were six hours long. Given the more spiritual and devotional atmosphere of this act, it is quite possible that Hernando de Ávila planned the event this way.

The production of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* utilized many sounds executed by actors offstage to illustrate the war between Leovigildo's and Hermenegildo's troops. Music was also important for this production, and so a platform, separated from but close enough to the main stage, was built to host many musicians and singers. Dance was also utilized in the *entretenimiento*. However, according to period sources, it was in the costumes, the staging, and the acting that this tragedy achieved its most visually stunning moments. Jesuit priest Santibáñez attended one of the performances and noted in his *Historia General de la Provincia de Andalucía de la Compañía de Jesus* that the costumes were elaborate and costly:

Pues a juicio de todos pasó de tres millones la estimación que el valor de oros, joyas, cadenas, tela y pedrería, con que se mostraron ornados bizarros y curiosos cien personajes que salieron al tablado y entraban acomponer esta pompa y representación. Afirman por muy cierto que san Hermenegildo y las dos Virtudes, Fe e Costancia, (que siempre le gaurneçían los lados) portaban sobre sí cien mil ducados de joyas.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> "According to all people present the value of the gold, jewels, chains, and precious stones that adorned in a peculiar and odd manner the one hundred characters surpassed three million ducats. These sources are certain that Hermenegildo and the two virtues, Faith and Constancy, that never left his side wore one hundred thousand ducats worth of jewels." Quoted in J. Menéndez Peláez, 143.

As Santibáñez testified, it was a constant source of marvel for the audience attending the opening of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* to see so many actors dressed in sophisticated clothes and adorned with glamorous jewelry. Another source points out how all the dresses were made specifically for this occasion and “unos de tela de plata, otros de tela de oro; unos bordados y otros franjados de oro y plata.”<sup>163</sup> While the stage setting could be suggestive of the locale, and neutral in its multiple uses, the costumes were supposed to establish class distinction, recreate social order, and help characterization.

The most eye-catching moments of the evening would have been in the Entertainment, where the imaginative and fictional nature of the story could break free from the dramaturgical limits of the *comedia martiriológica*. Hercules battles a lion, a bear, and a seven-headed dragon spitting fire. There were actors playing cats that are freed from a cage, teeth turning into armed children, two sets of twins dressed alike, many fights, a lot of running, and finally the transformation of Scientia from a poor-looking character into a resplendent and richly dressed iconic figure.

Eighty students took part in *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* and in the entertainment *Hercules, vencedor de la ignorancia*, while only thirty-nine of them had speaking roles, the large number would have impressed the audience and assured the effectiveness of the group scenes.<sup>164</sup> It is certain that the actors contributed to the enhancement of the dramatic and visual potential of those moments.<sup>165</sup> Vocal and physical expression must have been carefully rehearsed, as eyewitness accounts of the first performance of the tragedy spoke about the outstanding aptitude

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<sup>163</sup> “some (were made) of threads of silver, some of gold, others had borders and others had fringes of gold and silver.” Cited in J. Alonso Asenjo, 466.

<sup>164</sup> Cayo González Gutiérrez, “La tragedia de San Hermenegildo,” *Epos: Revista de filología*, No. 8, 1992, 270.

<sup>165</sup> For more detailed information about the primacy of acting in the Jesuit colleges, see Ronald G. Eagle, “Lang’s Discourse on Stage Movement,” *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2. (May, 1970), pp. 179-187. Eagle concentrates mainly on the career of German Jesuit Franz Lang and his treatise on stage acting. However, his research addresses also the influence Lang had on the development of German modern acting, as well as the formation of the director as supervisor of all aspects of theatre production.

of the students, who “representaron todos tan bien que parecía que en toda su vida habían ejercitado en esto y que cada uno había nacido para el personaje que representaba.”<sup>166</sup> One must assume that the choragus had chosen the best students to perform in this production, and that rehearsal must have been long and challenging for the actors involved. Alonso Asenjo corroborates this assumption with the fact that two students, D. Baltasar de Portas and Francisco Valverde, played two characters each, most likely because they possessed extraordinary talent. In fact, this casting practice was unusual in the Jesuit colleges because the faculty wanted to include the largest number of students in each production in order to give everybody the chance to show the audience the skills they had acquired in class. The son of the Duke of Medina Sidonia performed the role of Hermenegildo, a fact that Alonso Asenjo considers a compromise made to oblige the nobility of the family more than an honest artistic choice.<sup>167</sup>

The documentary sources all agree that the representation of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* was very successful, and tarnished only by the crowd of people that forced its way into the courtyard and took almost all the seats, leaving only a few for the authorities. A performance was scheduled for the next day to accommodate all the people who wanted to see the play.

### **3.1.5 The crown between politics and theology**

At the beginning of the play, Hermenegildo is the innocent character who does not want to fight but must defend himself against an evil father. His attitude towards seizing political power and

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<sup>166</sup> “[The students] acted so well that it looked as if they had practised their entire lives and were born to be the characters they portrayed.” Alonso Asenjo, 452.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

the Visigoth crown is one of timid interest, almost a consequence of what his faith and Christian calling compel him to achieve. The main objective is not that of becoming king but that of being a good Christian. Already in act I, Hermenegildo shows signs of doubt about the outcome of the war and his unconscious resistance to it.<sup>168</sup> As the inevitability of the battle against Leovigildo becomes more and more evident, Hermenegildo is assailed by doubts, personified by the presence of the allegorical character of Temor (Fear). When comforted by the allegorical figures of Constancia (Constance), Deseo (Desire), Fe (Faith) and Zelo (Zeal), he appears to regain some of his confidence. During a ritualistically staged scene, Zeal and the other allegorical characters make Hermenegildo a cavalier and they dress him in the warrior's costume. At the end of this ceremony, Hermenegildo swears to Seville that he will fight to defend the Catholic faith of the city. Nevertheless, Hermenegildo's fascination with his own martyrdom is relentless and it becomes preponderant in the following acts, where he discovers his true vocation as sacrificial victim. It is a slow but progressive maturation which takes the protagonist on a journey of self-discovery and acceptance of his destiny and mission. In act II, he envisions the powerful prodigies his own blood could perform for the good of Seville, in a scene that is suspended between a nightmarish atmosphere and a mystical desire for total annihilation in nature.

¡O, dulce Patria! ¡O, suelo sevillano!  
¡Quán buenas suertes fueran y cuán buenas  
Las tuyas, con favor tan soberano!

Si el oro, que te traes en sus arenas  
El escandaloso Betis, se esmaltasse  
Del roxo rosicler de aquestas venas;

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<sup>168</sup> Aunque todo me faltasse / Y Roma no me ayudasse, / Tengo acá prendas de Dios ... Soberano rey del cielo, / De ti nos venga el Consuelo / Con tu celestial ayuda, / Que, si tu favor me escuda, / Ningún peligro recelo. ("Even if I were deserted and Rome refused to help, I have in here the gifts of God ... Supreme king of Heaven, give us your judgement and divine help, because I fear no danger if I have your favor as a shield.") *TSH*, 196-197.

Si tu campo en mi sangre se bañasse,  
Si mi sangre a tus flores tinte diesse,  
Si tu fe con mi sangre se firmasse,

¿Quién duda que tu Gloria más cresciesse,  
Que la de aquella Antigua y noble Roma  
Y que mucho mayor y mejor fuesse.<sup>169</sup>

This scene portrays Hermenegildo's blood as the fertilizer that can bring to the city a glory comparable to or greater than that of Rome, and inscribes the presence of the saint as a connective force and structural foundation of Seville.

This urge to die a martyr also resurfaces in act III, where Recaredo offers Hermenegildo a way out of the imminent civil war by giving him the chance to leave Seville unarmed and relocate with his court in Galitia or Asturia. Hermenegildo refuses the generous offer and states once more his responsibility towards Seville, and his firm hope to die in its defense. Even before the beginning of any military action, Hermenegildo has embraced the allure of sacrificing his body for the greater good of his fellow citizens.

Que, pues por patria me la dio la suerte,  
No es bien desemparrarla, y porque creo  
Que en ella he de sufrir gloriosa muerte.

Que, si en mi casa la ventura veo  
Que el ánimo me da, mi sangre indigna  
Regará el fertile suelo que poseo.

Aquí, si el cielo assí lo determina,  
Elijo con martirio venturoso  
Triumphar y merecer palma divina.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> "Oh, sweet motherland! Oh, soil of Seville! Your good fortunes were many and good for being granted such supreme favor. If the gold that carries in its sand the loud river Betis were enameled by the read blood of these vein, if your fields bathed in my blood, if my blood colored your flowers, if your faith was made firm by my blood, who could doubt that your glory would grow past that of ancient and noble Rome, and that it would be greater and better." *Ibid.*, 243.

His resolution is strengthened by the fact that Ingunda must leave with the Romans as a guarantee that he will pay the troops. He declares that “A sufrir estoy dispuesto” (“I am willing to suffer”), and promises to kiss the cross and endure joyously all the torments that lie ahead of him: “Daré a la cruz mil abraços, / Y alegre al cordel los braços; / Serán risas, serán flores / Los tormentos y dolores / Hasta hazerme pedaços.”<sup>171</sup> Here his fantasy of self-destruction and dissolution reappears in the image of being cut to pieces. Hermenegildo has envisaged and accepted that the worth of a martyr is that of being shared and consumed for the greater good of the community, in this case Seville. In his self-appointed role as martyr, Hermenegildo closely mirrors Jesus Christ’s institution of the Eucharistic ceremony during which the eating of his body and drinking of his blood allow for purification from sins and for God’s forgiveness. The only desire of the prince is to die not to fight. Even when Leodegario attempts to shake him out of his tearful mood for the departure of Ingunda with the terrifying image of the incoming enemies knocking at his doorstep (“¿Quireres que los enemigos / Vengan a buscarte a casa?” “Do you want that your enemies come knocking on your door?”), Hermenegildo can only concentrate on his interior struggle. He is no longer preoccupied with the crown as a material object signifying earthly power and dominance. As the war against Leovigildo was an act of self-defense geared at protecting Seville, Hermenegildo now understands that he can deliver Seville from the threat of heresy by sacrificing himself as a martyr. He has not renounced his mission, but only the way he is going to accomplish it. Hermenegildo has completely forgotten about the crown, and he can only aspire to the bloody crown of thorns that adorned Christ’s head. Giving his farewell to his

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<sup>170</sup> “Even though I received it as a country by chance, it is good to remember it because I believe that I will endure a glorious death here. If I see in my house any happiness that my soul gives me, it is that my unworthy blood will water this fertile soil. Here, if heaven wants so, I choose to triumph and deserve the divine palm with a fortunate martyrdom.” *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>171</sup> “I will give the cross a thousand hugs and gladly I will embrace the cord. The torments and pains will be laughter and flowers until I am dismembered.” *Ibid.*, 297.

son Atanagildo, Hermenegildo reminds him that “La fe sea vuestro tesoro, / el ceptro y corona de oro, / En que, plega a Dios, no falte / El rosicler que la esmalte / Con un sangriento decoro,” and emphasizes the subordination of the crown to the sacrifice of one’s own life.<sup>172</sup> In act IV, after the defection of the Byzantines and the consequent destruction of his army, Hermenegildo seeks refuge in a castle he finds on his way. When the guard asks him “Quién vive” (“Who is alive?”), in order to determine the identity of the person asking admittance, he cryptically replies “Vive el que muere” (“lives the one who dies”), expressing both his distress for losing the battle and his troops, and his belief that death is the necessary instrument for gaining eternal life. After declaring “espero muerte sabrosa” (“I await a tasty death”), he states a few lines later that his defeat is not due to bad luck, but to the “ley de providencia” (“law of providence”). With this sentence, he refuses to accept the randomness of his human experience, and relates his undoing to a divine design that auspicates his martyrdom.<sup>173</sup>

At the end of act IV, one can see the physical manifestation of Hermenegildo’s desire for martyrdom in the replacing of his royal military garments with more humble clothes. This moment mirrors scene 6 of act I, because it represents the undoing of the dressing ceremony in which Zeal had dressed Hermenegildo with the clothes and military signifiers of the warrior. In act IV, Hermenegildo sheds his earthly identity and acquires that of the martyr: miserable, humble, devout, transfixed in the contemplation of God, eager to leave the world. The stage direction calls for “Pónenle un vestido vil” (“They dress him in humble clothes”), and “Pónenle unos grillos y cadenas” (“They shackle and chain him”), a powerful moment that must have profoundly moved the audience for the drastic change of fortune of Hermenegildo.<sup>174</sup> Act IV

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<sup>172</sup> “May your faith be your treasure, your scepter and your golden crown. And pray to God that it never lacks the red color to enamel it with a bloody decorum.” *Ibid.*, 302-303.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 332-333.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 337-338.



ends with Hermenegildo's invocation "A ti mi ofresco, mi Dios" ("I offer myself to you, God"), and with Lisardo leading the martyr to his prison in tower. The final act is utterly permeated with the mystical and devotional call for martyrdom that has been building up since act I. Ironically, Hermenegildo, who is preparing for the completion of his terrestrial destiny, is almost completely absent from it. He is talked about, discussed, praised, and despised by the other characters, but he has retreated to the margins of the narrative where he is already transfigured into a halo of sanctity. This strategy is quite effective because it maintains the centrality of the leading character by highlighting how his behavior is affecting the other characters in the story. Hermenegildo has exhausted the functionality of the words and their power to convince his opponents. He is now conscious that there is only one action left for him to perform, and that is his death. His role as sacrificial victim is exemplified by his identification with the lamb, a typical sacrifice in the Bible as well as one of the recurring images for Jesus Christ, depicted as *Agnus Dei*. The identification of Hermenegildo with the lamb is predicated against the depiction of Leovigildo as "lobo carnicero, que despedaces con sangrienta boca las carnes inocentes de un cordero."<sup>175</sup> The bestiality of Leovigildo's behavior is depicted vividly with gory details in the image of a hungry wolf dismembering a lamb.

The authors of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* knew that the beheading scene was the most significant and emotionally engrossing moment in the entire play, and they worked hard to enhance its dramatic potential. Celio announces the death of Ingunda, and reports her last words "Mi Dios, solo aquestos quiero: ¡Muera mártir mi marido!" using the direct speech to suggest her physical presence on stage.<sup>176</sup> This sentence, which is both her wish for Hermenegildo's martyrdom, as well as its prediction, helps to build up an atmosphere of trepid expectation and

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<sup>175</sup> "Carnivorous wolf that tears with a bloodied mouth at the innocent flesh of a lamb." *Ibid.*, 359.

<sup>176</sup> "My God, only this I ask of you that my husband die a martyr."

imminence. Lisandro's words have the same effect as they describe the prince eagerly awaiting his execution, scourging his body with the cilice, sleeping on the floor, and rejoicing in the thought of his captivity and incoming death. By enjoying his physical suffering and seeking more of it, Hermenegildo turns into a penitent and a mystic. His rejection of the world, symbolized by the mistreatment of his physical body, points the spectators' attention to the fact that he is preparing himself for the eternal life of the soul. In his last scene, Hermenegildo reiterates the image of the purifying blood and that of the crown as inescapably tied together:

Goze, pues, yo tal thesoro,  
Y cueste lo que costare,  
Que si mis venas rasgare,  
Otras me descubre de oro,

Del qual ha de ser labrada  
Mi corona esclarecida  
Al golpe de la herida  
De solo un golpe acavada.

Y con ella coronado,  
Y con mi sangre teñido,  
Como a rey supremo unguido  
No me faltara reinado.<sup>177</sup>

Hermenegildo will receive a greater and more durable kingdom in Heaven as the Angel tells Seville at the end of scene 5: "Adiós que voy de largo a ligera / A hallarme al recibo y alto asiento, / Que al rey Ermenegildo en reino eterno / Se le dará por premio sempiterno."<sup>178</sup>

While on one hand it is undeniable that *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* shows a hero who cares more about dying a martyr than he cares about securing the Visigoth crown for

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<sup>177</sup> May I enjoy this treasure at all costs, because if my veins are cut open, other veins will cover me in gold. The same gold that must adorn my shining crown that will be achieved at the price of one single blow. When I am crowned with it and anointed by my own blood, I will be a supreme king and I will have a kingdom." Ibid., 372-373.

<sup>178</sup> "Farewell! I am going with swift and wide glides to witness the reception and noble seat that Hermenegildo has received in the eternal kingdom as his everlasting reward." Ibid., 367.

himself, the play has a lot to say about the nature of political power and the conduct that is expected of the worthy monarch. Not only is it clear in specifying that the crown gained through Christian martyrdom is superior to the material crown of the king, it also comments on what qualities the perfect candidate to the crown should display. While the tragedy represents the confrontation between the “homo religioso” and “homo politicus,” as Ruiz Ramón clearly states, it also irrefutably aims at investigating the relationship between these two identities in the context of post-Reformation Europe.<sup>179</sup>

In the Christendom embraced by the play, the only king who is acceptable is the Catholic king because he is inspired by the moral and ethical principles of the Bible. Leovigildo functions as a reminder of the evils a heretic monarch might commit, and the kind of repercussions his behavior could have on his subjects. Not only does he sentence his own son to death, he is also vindictive, stubborn, aggressive, heartless, manipulative, and cruel towards his own people. His depiction as a “leon cruel” (“cruel lion”) and “tigre fiera” (“ferocious tiger”) in verse 5527 and “lobo carnicero” (“carnivorous wolf”) in verse 5543, tearing at the innocent flesh of a meek lamb, places him in direct opposition to his son Hermenegildo, who is instead pacific and inspired by good moral and religious codes. In brief, Leovigildo is a tyrant that should, and will be, removed from power. The words *tyrano* and *tyrannia* are recurrent in the tragedy and used in different contexts to clarify the position of the Society of Jesus on matters of governing and ruling.

For example, Leandro establishes the connection between heresy and bad government while talking in Latin to the Cardinal from Rome:

Regem impium, scelereque Arrianeque haereses.

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<sup>179</sup> Francisco Ruiz Ramón, *Historia del teatro español (Desde sus orígenes hasta 1900)* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1979), 101.

Heu perditum! Suos, et alios perdidit,  
Qui fautor improbus, et in Erebum deiici  
Fecit, et in hoc tempore bono cum filio  
Is quash abet turbas, et in quos irrui  
Demens tumultus, ut suum quoque filium,  
Si valeat insanus Ermenegildum enecet.<sup>180</sup>

By explaining Leovigildo's behavior with his acceptance of Arius' heresy, Leandro equates religious unorthodoxy with evil doing and implies that Catholicism is the *conditio sine qua non* of good governing. Furthermore, he illustrates the nefarious consequences of having a heretic king by addressing the wide spread confusion among Leovigildo's subjects. Leandro also mentions the king's murder of Hermenegildo to exemplify how a bad king affects negatively both the collectivity and the single individual. It is no surprise that Leandro's answer to the king's abuses is "Ut bella faciat," the war. This is a decision also shared by the Cardinal who assures the spiritual and military help of Rome.

Hermenegildo pushes Leandro's position even further when talking to Recaredo in act II. Answering his brother who had asked him to not reject the Arianism that all other Visigoth kings before him had accepted, he says that "Todos ellos herejes son y fueron / Manchados con infamia tan notoria, / Que el título de rey no merecieron."<sup>181</sup> In his opinion, and in that of the Society of Jesus, a heretic is undeserving of the title of king. Consequently Hermenegildo is stating in a very subtle, yet clear manner, that his father should not be king. Hermenegildo's claim that his decision to go to war against his father was a defensive act should be reconsidered in the light of the Jesuits' notions of regicide as an extreme measure to be used when a king becomes a tyrant. It is because of Leovigildo's *tyranía* that Hermenegildo has decided to fight,

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<sup>180</sup> "An impious king for the evilness of the Arianistic heresy. Oh, evil! And he caused not only his own perdition, but also that of others. This impious protector .... And now a mad confusion afflicts the people and he is willing to kill his own son Hermenegildo." *TSH*, 179.

<sup>181</sup> "All those are and were heretics, stained by an infamy so well known that they do not deserve the title of king."

not simply to defend himself and Seville from an invading army. The epilogue of act I stresses his martial attitude as he promises to protect to Seville from the tyrant.

Hazed con migo la gloriosa muestra

Que con Judith hizistes algún día  
Porque la tyranía  
Del impío vando quede quebrantada,  
Y al esgrimir de mi luziente espada,  
Saltarán hasta el cielo las centellas,  
Y con la lumber dellas  
Ciegos de vista quedarán sus ojos,  
Como lo están de fe por sus antojos.

.....

Y tú, o noble ciudad esclarecida,  
Fundada en le valor del fuerte Alcides  
Y por César traçada a lo Romano,  
Que después fuiste en las injustas lides  
De vandoleros Vándolos vendida  
Al duro yugo del poder tyrano,  
Si del fuego christiano,  
Que en mi pecho cathólico se emprende,  
Una sola centella el tuyo enciende,  
Confía en Dios y en esta diestra mía,  
Que de la tyranía  
Del herético vando, a quien resisto,  
Has de ser libre y entregada a Christo.<sup>182</sup>

Judith, a popular character on the Jesuit stage, is aptly used here to reiterate a story in the Bible dealing with the foreign invasion of the Christian town of Bethulia, the tyrannical behavior of a captain, and the heroic mission of a fearless heroine. According to the Bible's book of Judith, the

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<sup>182</sup> "Use me in a glorious enterprise the same way that you used Judith, so that the tyranny of the Vandal be broken. As a result of brandishing my shining sword, the sparks will reach the sky and their light will blind his eyes that are already blinded to faith because of his whims ... And you, noble and distinguished city, founded by the valor of the strong Alcides, forced to be Roman by Cesar, and sold by the barbaric Vandals to the tyrannic power, if one spark of the Christian fire that started in my chest resides in yours, confide in my right arm that I will free you of the tyranny of the heretic and will convey you to Christ." Ibid., 212-213.

Assyrian king Nabuchodonosor in his attempt to conquer the Middle East had sent an army under the command of Holofernes to destroy Israel. Knowing that her town Bethulia was along the path of the Assyrian army, and wanting to prevent its destruction, Judith entered the Assyrian camp pretending to be a spy, got Holofernes drunk, and then decapitated him. The Assyrians were so surprised by the daring action, and so shocked by the death of their leader, that when the Jews attacked their camp, they fled and their army was completely wiped out. Judith's deed was warranted because she was trying to help her town. Not only was her action a justifiable answer to the unprovoked invasion of the Assyrians, it was also a legitimate and dutiful response because Holofernes was working for a pagan tyrant who wanted to be worshipped by his subjects. Although Hermenegildo never verbalizes his desire to commit patricide/regicide, the play alludes to the legitimacy of such an act by emphasizing the morality of Judith's murder of Holofernes.

The tragedy subtly scrutinizes Leovigildo's kingship by raising doubts about his moral quality, as well as his capability to rule the Visigoths. Hermenegildo describes how his father had tried to convince him to refute his belief in the Trinity "Con ardides, invenciones, / Con astucias, con enredos, / Con amenazas y miedos," which are strategies that can hardly be considered honorable and worthy of a king.<sup>183</sup> They show instead that he is willing to debase his position as monarch to achieve what he wants. They also suggest that Leovigildo does not possess the moral rectitude or the theological righteousness to sustain his heretical claims. He also lacks the negotiation skills to deal with Hermenegildo as a noble king would have, and he is shortsighted enough not to see the wrongness of his religious position. Those are also the reasons why the king resorts to violence and aggression to overcome his opponents. Whether the violence that characterizes the king's conduct is a consequence of his weak morals, or the angry reflection of his heretical beliefs, *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* makes a good case for

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<sup>183</sup> "With tricks, lies, ruses, shady plots, threats, and fears." Ibid.

Leovigildo's unsuitability to the crown. In the chorus that begins act V, he comes across as a reckless, rash, and stubborn individual:

Cruel tyrano, padre sin clemencia,  
Pon freno a la passion; ten más templança.  
La injusta execución del mal se impida.

No corras tan apriesa a la venganza  
Que, si muerte le diere tu sentencia,  
Será el matarle para darle vida.<sup>184</sup>

The recounting of Leovigildo's evil flaws for being a cruel tyrant, a father without clemency, and a man ruled by passions, vindictive, and without self-restraint, ends with the plea to change the death sentence. The words of the chorus preempt the punishment of any value as they acknowledge his very death would give Hermenegildo eternal life. The Angel who announces the ascent of Hermenegildo to heaven in act V, reinforces the direct role of Leovigildo's sentence in granting Hermenegildo "las plumas de la fama" ("the feathers of fame.")<sup>185</sup> Hermenegildo is aware of this turn of dramatic irony, and in the following speech he taunts his father for his blindness in not seeing the working of the divine providence: "Piensa que alcança victoria / Con darme tan cruda muerte, / Y como ciego no advierte / Que essa es mi palma y mi gloria."<sup>186</sup> The king experiences the impossible task of hurting Hermenegildo, because by sentencing him to death he is sending him to Heaven; and by sparing his life, he is allowing his son to spread his Trinitarian ideas. However, it is Leovigildo's behavior that is under the dramatic microscope, not the future of Hermenegildo. The chorus is pointing out to

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<sup>184</sup> "Cruel tyrant, merciless father, refrain your will, show more moderation, stop the unjust execution. Do not resort to vengeance so quickly because if your sentence delivers him to his death, it will also give him life." Ibid., 341.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 366.

<sup>186</sup> "You think you are winning by giving me such cruel death but, just like a blind man, you do not realize that this is my palm and my victory." Ibid., 368.

Leovigildo that the only character who is going to pay for his despotic behavior is himself, not his son who will achieve eternal life in his earthly death. Ingunda had stressed the ineffectuality of violence on the Christian soul in act II, when she claims that “El cuello del cristiano no se doma / Con los agudos filos del cuchillo / Que el tirano furor en manos toma.”<sup>187</sup> Leovigildo’s tyrannical behavior is evident both in his attempt to force heretical ideas on his subjects, and in his decision to put Hermenegildo to death. In fact, Axarafe puts being an impious father and inhuman king under the same interpretive umbrella of the tyrant: “Contra el furor tyrano / De un impío padre y rey tan inhumano.”<sup>188</sup> This idea is reiterated in Leovigildo’s self-accusation of being undeserving of the title of king, which symbolizes the final blow to the legitimacy of his position as monarch. After giving Sisberto the order to carry out the death penalty, Leovigildo exclaims “El sol me resplandesce injustamente, / Indigno soy de púrpura y corona, / Si en mis leyes tal culpa se consiente.”<sup>189</sup> The duress of his laws, which permit the execution of an innocent person, as well as his reinforcement of these laws, make Leovigildo unworthy of his title, and confine him to his dramatic destiny as tyrant. His identification with the Roman emperor Nero, which had started in act III, scene 2, with Leovigildo’s comparison of his destruction of Seville with Nero’s burning of Rome, is finalized by the words of Recaredo in act V, scene 4, who advises his father that by murdering Hermenegildo he will acquire the ignominious fame of Nero.

While *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* is explicit in its intent to demonize Leovigildo as a despot and exalt Hermenegildo as the true Christian hero, it also allows the critical space to discuss the issue of regicide that had been troubling the Society of Jesus since its foundation. In

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<sup>187</sup> “The neck of the Christian cannot be tamed by the sharp knife that the tyrant carries in his hand. ” Ibid., 243.

<sup>188</sup> “Against the tyrannical fury of an impious father and such an inhuman king. ” Ibid.,365.

<sup>189</sup> “The sun shines undeservingly on me. I am unworthy of the royal crown if under my laws such fault is committed.” Ibid., 356.



spite of the premise that the war started as an act of aggression of Leovigildo, Hernando de Ávila and his collaborators knew well enough that opponents and critics of the Jesuits might have viewed Hermenegildo as a rebellious son trying to dispossess his father of his legitimate position as monarch of the Visigoth state. In order to address and mitigate a possible controversy over the delicate topic of regicide and deposition, they first voiced this idea through the words of the Roman captains Hortensio, Flaminio, and Curcio in act III. The Roman captains appropriate the word *tyrania* and *tyrano* and use them to support their accusations against Hermenegildo. Hortensio declares that what Hermenegildo is attempting to achieve is regicide, and he calls Hermenegildo a “Tyrannus perfidus” and a traitor of faith; Curcio thinks the prince is committing a “grave tyrania,” and Flaminio states that it is warranted to betray Hermenegildo because he is a tyrant.<sup>190</sup>

The statements of the Roman captains could create a situation of potential stalemate because the accusations of tyranny against Leovigildo and those moved against Hermenegildo could simply cancel out each other, and lose every capacity to define criminal behavior. Nonetheless, the situation is much more complex, because the writers of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* characterize the captains from the very beginning as ambiguous, and turn them, by the beginning of act IV, into the villains of the story. The Romans are merely mercenaries selling their favors for money. They do not elicit respect or honor. They are depicted as dishonorable because they betray Hermenegildo even after he has accepted to hand over Ingunda and Athanagildo as guarantees that he would pay the troops. The Romans also knew ahead of time what their role in the war was going to be, and which side they would fight for, and they had accepted to side with Hermenegildo. It is only after their payment is delayed that they change their minds about supporting the prince. They go far beyond the breaking of their military

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 256, 310, 317-318.

alliance with him, they make sure that Leovigildo wins the battle and that Hermenegildo is captured. Their argument that Hermenegildo is trying to commit regicide is weak and unfounded and it is apparent that they are trying to justify their cowardice and greediness. The authors of the tragedy construct the argumentations of Hortenso, Flaminio and Curcio as faulty and unbelievable. The lack of morals of the Roman captains is evident in the fact that they blame their own treachery on their appetite for gold in act IV, scene 4.

FLAMINIO            ¡O, vil ceca, ¡o, maledita!  
                          ¡Fame, o fiame di tesoro!  
                          ¿A quale ingiusto indecoro  
                          Non vi oblige, non vi incita  
                          Questo apetito dell'oro?<sup>191</sup>

The accusation of tyranny moved by the Romans against Hermenegildo does not carry any validity because the argument they attempt to construct is not sustainable due to their weak moral standing. In fact, the allegation appears to make its way in the tragedy with the only purpose to be proven wrong. It is a strategy to both prevent and preempt any accusation that might have been moved against the Society of Jesus to support the regicide and deposition of monarchs who opposed the Catholic Church. Showing that the only characters accusing Hermenegildo are corrupt traitors guarantees that the focus of the story remains on the real tyrant, Leovigildo, and on the supremacy of the spiritual crown, gained through martyrdom, over the material crown of the courts.

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<sup>191</sup> “Oh vile, blind, and damned hunger for treasures. To what unjust undecorous behavior the appetite for gold has led us!” Ibid., 320.

### 3.1.6 *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* and the Jesuit tragedy

Following the tragic taxonomies of Raymond Williams, I will consistently refer to the concepts of ‘suffering’, ‘loss’, and ‘order’ as guiding principles in trying to figure out the tragic vision embodied by *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*.<sup>192</sup> Hermenegildo qualifies only partially as an Aristotelian hero. He is indeed a worthy man who ends up in misfortune, but the quality of his *hamartia*, which is the flaw of having neglected to see the fatal unfolding of his human destiny and therefore for having ‘missed the mark,’ is problematic to define according to Aristotle’s *Poetics*. On one hand one could consider Hermenegildo as a flawed character who commits a mistake by failing to realize who truly loves him, specifically his father Leovigildo and his brother Recaredo. However, this interpretation does not account for the fact that Hermenegildo has a spiritual family, embodied by Leandro and the Cardinal, as well as a Catholic wife, Ingunda, who supports him fully. This acquired family appears to be more important to Hermenegildo than the blood family. Therefore, the loss of the connection with the loved ones does not bring about the isolation that so often characterizes the tragic hero in his quest for self-affirmation. More importantly, it is not so easy to relate his *hamartia* to an error of judgment because Hermenegildo is very much aware of the consequences of his actions throughout the play and he willingly decides to die for his faith.<sup>193</sup> Leodegario, a member of Hermenegildo’s court, frames the world of the play as a space in which the hero has only one possible choice.

La Gloria y honra de Dios  
Pesana mas que padre y madre.

No es en un hijo crueldad  
Negar a un padre infiel,

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<sup>192</sup> Williams Raymond, *Modern Tragedy* (London : Chatto & Windus, 1966), 13-61.

<sup>193</sup> See Larry Bouchard, *Tragic Method and Tragic Theology: Evil in Contemporary Drama and Religious Thought* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 97.

Por ser a su Dios fiel;  
Antes es grande piedad  
Serle en tal caso cruel.<sup>194</sup>

If the tragic hero “must choose and cannot choose well,”<sup>195</sup> as George Boas says, then there must be something very un-tragic about Hermenegildo. The Jesuit hero has only two possible choices, to betray either God or his father, and he is faced with only two possible consequences, salvation or damnation. Hermenegildo makes the only choice that is right in the world the playwrights have created for him; his consciousness is determined by his faith and as such it remains unswerving.

It is interesting to notice how this play conceptualizes the idea of suffering to understand the nature of the tragic experience in the Jesuitical drama of the sixteenth century. Hermenegildo’s sufferance is apparently attributable to his being torn between the love of his father and the love of God. During his monologues, he reiterates his doubts about which decision is the better one, as they both seem to entail some loss. More than once he engages in conversation with Fear and Desire, the two allegorical figures that function almost as a chorus in exposing the hero’s inner feelings, and he vents his doubts about the right path to take. This ambivalence reoccurs when he finds out the Roman captains have betrayed him and there is now no hope to resist his father’s army. However doubtful Hermenegildo might appear at times, the general tone and atmosphere of the tragedy suggest that his faith in God is the real driving force shaping his actions and thoughts. In scene 4 of act II, after the theological confrontation between Leandro and Paschasio, Hermenegildo strongly resolves to fight his father with the troops that Hortensio promised him, and there is no doubt clouding his decision.

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<sup>194</sup> “The glory and honor of God weigh more than the father and the mother. It is not cruel to deny a pagan father when one must be faithful to God. Instead it’s a sign of pity to be cruel to him.” *TSH*, 193.

<sup>195</sup> George Boas, “The Evolution of the Tragic Hero,” in Robert W. Corrigan, ed., *Tragedy: Vision and Form*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 124.

In spite of the doubts he manifests in the first three acts, he appears to be one-dimensional in pursuing and sustaining his tragic mission for the remaining two final acts of the tragedy. Hermenegildo's suffering then is not related to the loss of connection with his father, nor to the loss of any other earthly relationship, including the death of Ingunda. It is rather a circumstantial response to the exigencies of the tragic genre as it was perceived and used by the Jesuits. The playwrights knew it was essential to the making of an effective tragedy to raise the stakes for the hero and show that he is losing or sacrificing a lot of his life in order to gain the greater good of eternal life. However, Hermenegildo transcends his human limits so early in the play that it is problematic to see his sacrifice as an action dictated by his humanity. In act V, he replies to Leovigildo's threat by saying that there is a higher court than Leovigildo, that of God, which will bestow on him the palm of victory.

Oigo la dura sentencia,  
Alegando en mi disculpa  
Que no es castigo de culpa  
Sino rigor de inclemencia.  
Y si de un rey inhumano  
Apelación no se admite,  
Mi consciencia se remite  
Al tribunal soberano

Piensa que alcanza Victoria  
Con darme tan cruda muerte,  
Y como ciego no advierte  
Que essa es mi palma y mi Gloria.  
Si no ay fuerça que lo vede,  
Ni potencia que lo impida  
Quitará al cuerpo la vida,  
Mas la del alma no puede.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> "I hear the harsh sentence and I testify as my excuse that it does not come as the punishment for a crime, but the rigor of your inclemency. If one cannot appeal to an inhuman king, my conscience refers itself to the superior tribunal. You think that you are winning by giving me such a hard death, but just like a blind man you don't see that what you are giving me is the palm of my victory, and my glory. If there is no power that sees it or stop it, you will kill my body, not my soul." *TSH*, 368-369.

Being that the body (*el cuerpo*) is the prison of the soul (*el alma*), dying is to Hermenegildo a liberation more than a punishment, something welcomed and sought out more than dreaded. The image of the *alma* surviving the mortal body recurs repeatedly in this tragedy, and always in this hierarchical connotation of the soul over the body. Again in act V when Leovigildo threatens him with putting "...tu cuerpo en prison, y en durísima cadena," Hermenegildo replies by saying "Mas el alma estará de esse tormento y passion...Si el cuerpo estuviere atado, el alma estará más libre."<sup>197</sup> Hermenegildo idealizes death and he empties it of its power to deprive man of something meaningful: his life. In fact, when he is told of the death of Ingunda, instead of despair he exhibits an otherworldly calmness, and the desire to be reunited with her soon in the afterlife.

Susan Langer talks about the tragic rhythm as a cadential movement from growth to death, and involving the stations of growth, maturity, and decline, within which the hero fulfills his human nature and exhausts his human potential.<sup>198</sup> In Langer's theory, 'humanity' is a key word in understanding the tragic action, as the hero has nothing but his own life to offer to the world. In order to attain tragic status, the hero needs to value his life as something worth fighting for: "Tragedy can arise and flourish only where people are aware of individual life as an end in itself, and as a measure of other things."<sup>199</sup> Therefore the hero needs to perceive the limit, or duration of life as significant. However, in the *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* the protagonist shows no attachment to his human life, rather he is all too eager to sacrifice it. Hermenegildo's vocation crosses from the world of man to that of God, thus transitioning from tragedy to theology.

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<sup>197</sup> "If the body will be tied, the soul will be freer." *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>198</sup> Susan Langer, "*The Tragic Rhythm*," in Robert Corrigan, *Tragedy, Vision and Form*, 113.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

Hermenegildo sees the sacrifice of his life as an active contribution to the greater glory of God. The fact that in this tragedy it is possible to find a valid reason for dying speaks somewhat to its tragic potential. However, this is not a sufficient condition unless it is fostered by the heroic conflict between self-affirmation and self-consummation. Since these two tensions are not competing nor challenging each other, but are instead emanating from the same heroic vocation, *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* fails to achieve a truly compelling tragic quality. The struggle for self-affirmation within the two poles of winning and losing entails the possibility for the hero to win by losing and simultaneously to lose by winning. This tragic energy simply does not exist in this play. Hermenegildo does not lose anything that is essential to him, or that he really cares about, because the reward he gets by dying outweighs all that he is sacrificing with his terrestrial life. His single-mindedness inevitably thwarts his capacity to bring about the catharsis of pity. There is a reversal of fortune that affects Hermenegildo's status (he changes from being prince to being a prisoner waiting his execution) and through which he achieves a greater good, life in Heaven and God's love. But since his human life does not matter much, rather he perceives it as an obstacle to the true life of the soul, this change in fortune carries an almost diametrically opposite significance to that of the tragedy. It is undeniable that the tragic genre sees death as the most emblematic notion of change, however even more important is the meaning that is attached to life and death. When the four Ladies plead with the king for Hermenegildo's life, the Angel intervenes to silence them explaining that Hermenegildo's mission is far greater than they can imagine. The angel prophesizes that Recaredo would convert to Catholicism and that Seville, under his reign, would become the most influential city in Spain. Therefore, crying for Hermenegildo is not appropriate because "al rey Ermenegildo el reino eterno se le dará por premio sempiterno."<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> "Hermenegildo will receive the eternal kingdom as his eternal prize." *TSH*, 367.

Hermenegildo's actions, or lack of, create a teleological world where man's ultimate mission is to renounce his life to embrace the divinity of God. As in many medieval tragedies, *San Hermenegildo* portrays an exceptionally good hero who engages not in real actions but in the representation of a parable about the world. The suffering and notion of life exhibited by Hermenegildo is quite un-tragic because he is the representative of the moral world of the Society of Jesus and a symbol of its values and ideologies.

However, when one considers Leovigildo as the possible human hero of the tragedy, one has to face once again the mono-dimensional nature of this tragedy and how its theological theme cripples its dramatic potential. Leovigildo appears for the first time only in act III where he inquires as to whether Recaredo succeeded in convincing Hermenegildo to embrace the Arian doctrine of the Trinity. As it happened before with Hermenegildo, Leovigildo is torn between the love for his first son and the security of the realm, which he feels must be united under one religion to avoid dangerous political fragmentations. In his first speech, he addresses a series of questions to Recaredo, showing the agitated state of mind of someone who cannot fully understand the betrayal of his son.<sup>201</sup> When he starts considering his options and comes to the realization that as king he cannot do anything else but put Hermenegildo to death for his crime, Leovigildo quivers and equates his son's death with his own.

Que no es tan fácil hazaña  
Dar muerte a un hijo querido,  
Después de aver destruido  
La ciudad major de España

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<sup>201</sup> “¿Que al fin Ermenegildo está de suerte? / ¿Que prosigue el intento comenzado? / ¡Quánto te acercas a la dura muerte, / O, moço vanamente aconsejado! ¿Cómo? ¿Que piensa resistirme fuerte? / ¿Que no tiembla de verme a mí enojado? / ¿Que hazerme daño con las armas prueba, / Y que contra su padre assí se atreva?” (Did Hermenegildo finally come to his senses? Does he still continue with his intent? Oh ill-advised boy, you do not know how close you are getting to your death! What? Is he thinking of resisting me? Doesn't he tremble when he sees me so angry? Does he try to hurt me with his arms? Does he dare to do that to his own father?") Ibid., 261.



Y ve que ahora, que tengo  
Un solo enemigo, estoy  
Tal, que si buscarle voy,  
Pienso que a la muerte vengo!<sup>202</sup>

Leovigildo's dividedness appears to have the potential to bring about a catharsis of fear, based on the recognition of a meaningful truth the character did not see early on in the play. However, this division is only apparent and is 'talked about' more than 'acted upon'. As a matter of fact, Leovigildo is "whole,"<sup>203</sup> to use Robert Heilman's word, and as such he is single-minded and single-hearted. The static nature of the character does not lead to a catharsis, as Leovigildo does not change or learn anything he didn't know before. Even though he admits after the defeat of Hermenegildo's army in act IV that "Mía á sido la Victoria, mas tú me llebas la palma," pointing out how he loses his son by winning the battle, Leovigildo turns slowly, yet inexorably, into a quintessential villain; unproblematic, static, almost caricaturesque.<sup>204</sup> His identity is not shaped so much by his actions as it is by the way other characters talk about him. The original fragmentation of the character of which we get a glimpse in act III is slowly replaced by his vilification, an operation undertaken by Leandro, the Cardinal, Ingunda, and Hermenegildo himself, who defines Leovigildo "un rey inhumano."<sup>205</sup> Unlike what happens in *Antigone*, the Sophoclean tragedy that deals with the same tragic conflict of obedience to the state law versus the moral imperative posited by the love of your own family, *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* erases the tragic tension in both the characters and their actions. While Creon, who tries to do what is good by reinforcing the law of the city, recognizes the consequences of his mistake when

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<sup>202</sup> "It is not an easy task to put to death a loved son after having destroyed the greatest city in Spain. Now that I have only one enemy, I feel that if I go after him, I will die" *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>203</sup> Robert Heilman, *Tragedy and Melodrama. Versions of Experience* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1968), 98.

<sup>204</sup> "I won, but you took away the palm of my victory." *THS*, 335.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

he learns of the death of his son Haemon, Leovigildo holds on to his ideas until the very end, when he finally orders the fatal sentence without regret or guilt. When Northrop Frye talks about *anagnorisis* as the hero's "recognition of the determined shape of the life he has created for himself, with an implicit comparison with the uncreated potential life he has forsaken,"<sup>206</sup> he is really discussing the feeling of being torn between two or more options that cannot ever be satisfactory because they inevitably carry a fatal loss. This is not a feeling that Leovigildo, or any other character, experiences in the tragedy. *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* cannot accommodate feelings that are humanly complex because it is striving to create a world where humanity is nothing more than a mere reflection of the divine. *Antigone* casts an ominous shadow over the relationship between father and son (Creon-Haemon) and father and daughter (Oedipus-Antigone) by exploring the transmittable nature of guilt, and its transmutability into 'destiny', from one generation to another. *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, on the other hand, looks at family ties as a mere mechanical dramaturgical device, devoid of any socio-critical implication.

The theatre of the Jesuits needs villains and heroes to push forward its agenda, especially when it deals with dogmatic issues aroused by the protestant Reformation. What is at stake is not the artistic and esthetical quality of a work of art, but rather its power to influence, shape, and finally structure feelings. *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* annihilates the complexities of tragedy by simplifying the moral and human issues of the play and establishing a dichotomous opposition of forces. As the innocent Catholic victim of a cruel pagan father, Hermenegildo has a very limited agency in the tragedy. His weak attempt to rebel against Leovigildo is curbed by the betrayal of the Roman generals in act III, and from that point on he starts to construct his role as self-appointed victim. The only time he acquires a sense of agency is when he dies, because his

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<sup>206</sup> Northrop Frye, "The Mythos of Autumn," in Corrigan, *Tragedy, Vision and Form*, 128.

sacrifice paves the way to greater future actions, as the angel explains at the end of act V. Hermenegildo calls Christ the spouse of his soul, while he kisses the crucifix, and manifests his belief that he can't do anything wrong as long as he can see himself reflected in Jesus. Hermenegildo sees in the crucifix a mirror that reflects the divinity of Christ:

Dadme, o Fe, esse crucifixo  
Que ha de aliviar mis enojos,  
Para que clave los ojos  
Do tengo el coraçon fixo.

*(Hincasse de rodillas en un estrado Negro)*

Esposo de alma mia,  
Y espejo donde se mira  
Divino blanco a do tira  
Y centro de mi alegria.

Al rayo de vuestra luz,  
Por blanco os tengo a que tiro,  
Y no puedo errar el tiro  
Teniendoos clavado en cruz.<sup>207</sup>

The idea of martyrdom as supreme sacrifice, and the martyr's body as useful devotional instrument transform death into a spectacle of one man's worthy action. This might not be a tragic action in the Aristotelian sense of the word, however it proves to be effective when it is addressed to a community of believers. The tragedy *San Hermenegildo* explores these themes by showing a hero who willingly sacrifices his body on the altar of God's glory to achieve a greater price: the eternal life of the soul. By doing this, he also extends the benefits of his sacrifice to his community, represented in the play by his brother Recaredo and the people of Seville. The function of the martyr's body as a powerful tool to connect man to God is once again similar to

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<sup>207</sup> "Oh Faith, give me that crucifix so that I can alleviate my sorrows, and so that I can fix my eyes where I have fixed my heart. Oh, husband of my soul, and mirror that reflects a divine whiteness and the center of my happiness. I look at the ray of your light, and I cannot err when I have the image of you crucified on the cross." *TSH*, 371.

the function of Christ's body in the communion where the faithful are forgiven of their sins by eating/sharing a piece of his body. The dichotomous relationship between body and soul, and the greater use-value of the body once the hero renounces it, illustrate the Jesuitical theological notion that interprets suffering and death as a way to get closer to God and serve other people.<sup>208</sup>

In the specific instance of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, the hero succeeds in bringing spiritual order to a disordered human universe by turning the body into an object to sacrifice, thus showing the connection between human suffering and its individual and collective good. However, the kind of order this tragedy strives for is not created in the course of the play because the play does not engage the experience, comprehension, and resolution of disorder.<sup>209</sup> Instead, it simply introduces the oppositional forces at work in the plot without exploring them fully. Moreover, by portraying a hero who willingly renounces the world of man for that of God, and by equating his martyrdom to that of Christ, the tragedy strips the hero of his humanity, which inherently thwarts his tragic potential.

The lack of human weakness exhibited by the Jesuit protagonist, together with the use of a dramaturgical formula wherein good must always triumph over evil, applies to all of the five tragedies I investigate. In spite of the fact that Emanuele Tesauro and Sforza Pallavicino clearly intended to shape Hermenegildo into an Aristotelian tragic hero, the inherent innocence and goodness of their hero, together with the devotional intents of their works, annihilate the very

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<sup>208</sup> "Jesuits embraced persecution. In an era of reformation, when those claiming monopoly on religious truth so often found themselves in jail or en route to the stake, it was of the first importance to put a positive spin on adversity. (...) It offered Christians the chance to share in the carrying of Christ's cross, the opportunity to partake of his passion, to join the long list of martyrs and good confessors who had learned that persecution was the inevitable lot of godly people living in an inimical, carnal world that did not understand them. Jesuits, desperate to prove that their faith was not built upon the sand but upon the irremovable rock of Christ, signed up for the test with alacrity." Wright, *God's Soldiers*, 129.

<sup>209</sup> "The only consciousness that seems adequate in our world is then an exposure to the actual disorder. The only action that seems adequate is, really, a participation in the disorder as a way to end it ... The tragic action, in its deepest sense, is not the confirmation of disorder, but its experience, its comprehension and its resolution." Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, 81, 83.

possibility of tragedy. The Jesuit hero is too sheltered from the possibilities of guilt and his status as innocent victim remains untouched.

These considerations will help structure the argument of the following chapter, dealing with the heated debates happening in seventeenth century Italy over what qualifies as tragic in theatre. It will also foreshadow the differences in the dramaturgical and theatrical traditions of the Society of Jesus in Spain and Italy.

### **3.2 LOPE DE VEGA'S *LA MAYOR CORONA***

The Christianization of Spain had reached its apex at the beginning of the fifteenth century with the coronation of Isabel and Ferdinand, the unity of the houses of Aragon and Castilla, the expulsion of the Jews, the reinforcement of strict Catholic doctrine, and, finally, a peace treaty with Portugal. The strengthening of Spain's religious uniformity thrived within the political, cultural, and social stability that the monarchy of Philip II brought about between 1556 and 1598. In spite of the slow but relentless weakening of the empire, due to its size and extreme expansionistic aims, the Spain of Philip II was still strong enough to sustain a confident image both at home and abroad.

The religious fervor that fed in and stemmed out of those historical circumstances found in the arts its most natural vehicle of expression. Both secular and religious theatre traditions from the 1450s reflect a profound interest in religious themes, and use them for the entertainment and education of their audiences. In his investigation of the theatre of the Renaissance, Alfredo Hermenegildo noticed how it became hard to separate theatre produced at the Spanish court from that staged in religious colleges, because they share the same interest in religious themes, the

same normative and censorious trends, and the idea of a “publico cautivo,” a captive public that attended the dramatic representations because it was expected to comply with the expectation of the court and the Church.<sup>210</sup> The same trends extend to the secular *comedia* of the baroque era, which partakes of the same physical and cultural environment of the court and religious drama of the Renaissance and, as a result shows the same predilection for religious topics. Robert Morrison explains that there was no virtual separation between the sphere of the secular and the religious in Spain in the 1500s and 1600s, and this spirituality conditioned and affected all political matters.

The close relationship between secular and religious life was one of the medieval traditions maintained in the Golden Age. The heroism of the cloister was as much admired as that of the battlefield, and the same sort of determination characterized both military exploits and religious victories. The vast number of paintings and statues of saints, the importance and number even today of processions and *romerías*, testify as to the place held by these pious heroes and heroines in the mind of the seventeenth-century Spaniard.<sup>211</sup>

All major playwrights of the Golden Age experimented with stories taken directly from the Bible and the popular histories of the saints and martyrs. Many of those playwrights belonged to, or were associated with a religious order at one point in their lives. Tirso de Molina entered the Mercedarian Monks in 1601, Calderon de la Barca and Lope de Vega both studied in a Jesuit college, Calderon became a priest in 1651, and Lope became a devout Christian and a priest after his wife and son died. It is only during the Golden Age that religion and theatre come together to shape a communal vision of the world, and, besides a few exceptions, in the eighteenth century the two would take different paths.

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<sup>210</sup> Alfredo Hermenegildo, *El teatro del siglo XVI*, ed. R. de la Fuente, Historia de la literatura española, (Ediciones Madrid: Júcar, 1994), 89.

<sup>211</sup> Robert R. Morrison, *Lope de Vega and the Comedia de Santos* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 6.

Lope Félix de Vega Carpio (1562-1635) wrote many plays inspired by the religious climate of his time, however only a few of them have found scholarly attention, and even fewer have received critical editions. Recently, his *comedias religiosas* have started to gain academic recognition in studies such as those of Delfín Leocadio Garasa, Elisa Aragone Terni, Elma Dassbach, Robert Morrison, and Elaine Canning.<sup>212</sup> These scholars have created and defined a field of studies for Lope's religious comedies, and have succeeded in categorizing the dramaturgical and structural tenets of his works. They have demonstrated without doubt that Lope's scholarship has been thwarted and negatively affected by the dismissal of his religious plays; thus one must hope academic research on the subject will continue to develop in the future.

This chapter will address *La mayor corona*, one of Lope's least known and researched *comedia de santos*, in order to provide the reader with some interesting insights into how the topic of the martyrdom of Hermenegildo enters into the realm of Golden Age *comedia*, how its purpose changes as it makes its way outside of the walls of the Jesuit college, and how it reflects the dramaturgical tenets of Spanish Golden Age drama. This section also examines the content of the play, as well as its form, in the attempt to discover what separates the world of the *La mayor corona* from that of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, to shed light on their different theological and rhetorical agendas, and establish a comparison between the Jesuit *teatro de colegio* and the Lope's commercial *comedia de santos*.

In order to maintain the focus of this section, I will not delve extensively into the question of the authorship of *La mayor corona*. It is sufficient to say that scholarship is split on

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<sup>212</sup> See Delfín Leocadio Garasa, *Santos en escena* (Buenos Aires: Cuadernos del Sur, 1960); Elisa Aragone Terni, *Studio sulle Comedias de santos de Lope de Vega* (Firenze: Casa Editrice D'Anna, 1971); Elma Dassbach, *La comedia hagiográfica del Siglo de Oro español*, Ibérica, XXII (New York: Peter Lang, 1997); Robert Morrison, *Lope de Vega and the Comedia de Santos*, Ibérica, XXXIII (New York: Peter Lang, 2000); and Elaine Canning, *Lope de Vega's Comedias de Tema Religioso* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2004)

the subject and has never reached an agreement as to whether Lope is the writer of this play. Griswold Morley and Courtney Bruerton list *La mayor corona* under the doubtful works of Lope's, on the ground that this play presents a metric form that they could not trace in any of the plays positively identified as written by the playwright. Specifically, *La mayor corona* adopts what these two historians call the *silva* 1º, which displays the pattern aAbBcC. Other scholars, however, have found this interpretation too disputable to accept it blindly. Elisa Aragone Terni explains that it is risky to base the authenticity of Lope's plays on the sole basis of its metrics because a large number of his plays are lost. She also reminds her readers that even Morley and Bruerton admitted that it was "temerario decir que Lope no escribió nunca un pasaje de *silva* 1º en ninguna comedia."<sup>213</sup> Considering that Lope experimented with both multiple metric forms, and dramaturgical genres in his long and prolific career, it is easy to see how any attempt at establishing Lopean authorship should be cautious. It is for this, and also for other philological and dramaturgical reasons, that eminent scholars consider *La mayor corona* part of the playwright's canon.<sup>214</sup> This play was included in the first of the thirteen volumes anthology of Lope de Vega's *comedias*, published by Spain's Real Academia between 1916 and 1939.<sup>215</sup>

I accept Lope's authorship following the accredited opinion of Hispanic scholars Nicolas Gonzales Ruiz and Elisa Aragone Terni.<sup>216</sup> I believe there is enough substantive evidence to make the informed assumption that Lope was the author of this play, as I will explain in the following pages. Nevertheless, even though I believe it is important to establish the philological origin of this work, I must stress that the principal academic concern of the present work is how

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<sup>213</sup> "It is daring to say that Lope never wrote a *silva* 1º in any comedias." Aragone Terni, 89.

<sup>214</sup> See Robert Morrison, 78-80.

<sup>215</sup> Aragone Terni, 86.

<sup>216</sup> Nicolas Gonzales Ruiz, *Piezas Maestras del Teatro Teológico Español* (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1953). This anthology of Spanish theological plays of the Golden Age contains the edition of Lope de Vega's *La mayor corona* that I will be using in this dissertation.



*La mayor corona* offers a different interpretive standpoint to look at the story of San Hermenegildo. This dissertation concerns itself with how the *comedia* stage addresses the death of the saint, how the play differs and compares to the Jesuit version that precedes it, how it reflects the dramatic conventions of Golden Age drama, and, finally, how it deals with the subject matter from theological and rhetorical perspectives. *La mayor corona* provides the historian with the exclusive opportunity to scrutinize the modalities through which Hermenegildo, as a Jesuit trope, transfers and mutates once the commercial theatre appropriates its narrative.

### 3.2.1 Plot description

As most *comedias* of the Golden Age, *La mayor corona* is divided into three acts called *jornadas*. The date of first representation is unknown but considering the mention in act III of King Philip III, Queen Margaret, and their son and future heir to the throne Philip IV, one must assume it had to be staged a few years after the birth of Philip IV in 1605.

Compared to the large cast in *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, the number of characters in Lope's play is drastically reduced to fifteen. Leandro, the Roman captain, the Cardinal, and all the allegorical figures that featured predominantly in the *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* are not part of Lope's story. A few new characters join Hermenegildo, Ingunda, Leovigildo, Recaredo, and the Arian bishop in *La mayor corona*. Cardillo is the typical *grazioso* of Golden Age drama who functions as comic relief; Bada and Lísipa are two ladies who hope to marry Hermenegildo; Teosindo, Ormindo, Rodulfo, Americo, and Ofrido are soldiers and

courtesans; and a child plays the role of Hermenegildo's son. The Angel plays a very important role as a spiritual aid to Hermenegildo. He consoles the prince in act I, operates like a *deus ex machina* at the end of act II, and relates the heavenly destiny of the martyr at the end of act III.

In the first act, Teosindo, Ormino and Rodolfo discuss the imminent wedding of Hermenegildo with one of the twelve women selected by Leovigildo. They also mention an astrological prediction according to which a woman would cause Hermenegildo's death (Dicen, si habla verdad la astrología, / Que ha de causarle una mujer la muerte, / quitandole la sacra monarquía).<sup>217</sup> This is a major preoccupation for Hermenegildo who appears to have avoided marriage up until this point for this very reason. He needs to get married because he has to succeed to his father, who has decided to step down from the throne and retire. The play describes marriage as the condition to become king, and the two actions are supposed to follow each other in rapid succession: "Desposarte y coronarte / Quiere el rey, pues a llevarte / vamos, señor, la corona."<sup>218</sup> Leovigildo asks Hermenegildo to choose a wife out of all the noble candidates, but he replies that Leovigildo should choose one for him, and that the only requirement he expects in his future wife is her virtue. Leovigildo selects Ingunda, who is also the woman Hermenegildo desired to marry and whom he would have selected himself. Recaredo confesses in a monologue how distressed and furious he is, because he is also in love with Ingunda. Maddened by jealousy, and upset by the primogeniture laws that gave the kingdom to his brother, he swears to avenge himself on Hermenegildo. Lísipa and Bada are also enraged because they both hoped to be chosen to become Hermenegildo's wife. They visit Leovigildo and tell him that Ingunda is a Catholic. Leovigildo is enraged by the news, and he goes

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<sup>217</sup> "If astrology tells the truth, they say that a woman will cause his death, and take away from him the sacred monarchy." Lope de Vega, *La mayor corona*, in *Piezas Maestras del Teatro Teológico Español*, ed. by Nicolas Gonzales Ruiz (Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1953), 652-653.

<sup>218</sup> "The king wants to marry you and crown you, so we are going to get the crown." *Ibid.*, 660.

immediately to Hermenegildo's rooms to talk to his son on his wedding night. Hermenegildo, who is already falling in love with Ingunda, is surprised by the revelation, but he says that he will be able to convince his bride to convert. He also reminds Leovigildo that he is the one responsible for choosing Ingunda as his bride, and expresses his firm wish to stay married to her. Hermenegildo renews his promise that he would convince Ingunda to convert to Arianism, and this fact reassures Leovigildo. Then Hermenegildo goes to talk to Ingunda and witnesses a supernatural conversation about the Trinity between Ingunda and a spiritual 'voice'. The first act ends with Hermenegildo being caught in a spiritual event that he does not yet understand, but that has already raised doubts about the righteousness of Leovigildo's theological stance.

In act II, the reader learns that Ingunda has not abjured her faith in spite of the punishments and imprisonment Hermenegildo has given her. The two spouses argue vehemently over which doctrine is the truthful one, and Ingunda wins the argument. Due to Ingunda's devout conduct, Hermenegildo's resistance to Catholicism weakens, and he embraces Catholicism. However, he does not communicate the news to anybody yet. He waits to do so until his public address as king to the people of Seville, when he reveals that all the Arians will be exiled from Spain. The news cause great shock in the kingdom and Leovigildo decides to go to war against his son. The outcome of the military conflict is in favor of Leovigildo and all of Hermenegildo's friends, who had previously converted to Catholicism, end up siding with his father. While Hermenegildo and Ingunda are unable to escape Seville, the Angel rescues them by taking them away to a secure place on a *tramoya*, a flying theatrical machine.

At the beginning of act III, Hermenegildo and Ingunda are captured and must face Leovigildo. The old king asks them both to accept the Arianistic position but they decline to do so. Bada and Lisipa also try to convince Hermenegildo to convert because they hope that he

might take one of them as his new bride once he repudiates Ingunda. They too fail in their mission. In the final attempt to break his son's determination, Leovigildo has his grandchild killed and his head served on a plate to Hermenegildo. In spite of her sorrow, Ingunda encourages her husband to remain faithful by saying "¿Qué es un reino y qué es un hijo? / Por Dios su triunfo cantad, / que en vuestro llanto la crueldad / y la pena es regocijo."<sup>219</sup> The unswerving faith of the couple upsets Leovigildo even more, and he orders to separate Ingunda from Hermenegildo, hoping to weaken his spiritual strength. The departure of his wife saddens Hermenegildo terribly, but the Angel comes to remind him of the great challenge ahead of him, as well as the splendid future that his actions will bring about for Spain. In the following scene, Hermenegildo and Orosio, the heretical bishop, are discussing the divine nature of Christ in relationship to the dogma of the Trinity when Cardillo interrupts them. He is now blind and has again converted to Catholicism. Hermenegildo challenges Orosio to prove he is on God's side by restoring Cardillo's sight, but he cannot do it. Lisipa and Bada come back to seduce Hermenegildo and have him convert but he refuses to talk to them. Leovigildo returns and offers Hermenegildo the Holy Communion but he refuses it saying he can accept that sacrament only from the hands of a Catholic. Rodulfo carries out Leovigildo's order for the execution of Hermenegildo, and the protagonist finally dies as a Christian martyr. A series of apparitions represented as *tableaux vivants* conclude the play: Hermenegildo and Ingunda's son appears carrying his own head in his hand; the Trinity appears represented as a father who carries his crucified son in his arm, while the Holy Spirit is portrayed as a dove; and, finally, two angels. While Hermenegildo asks God for forgiveness for his enemies, Leovigildo, Recaredo, Orosio, and Rodulfo convert in mass to Catholicism.

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<sup>219</sup> "What is a kingdom, and what is a son? Sing his triumph to God, because the cruelty and the punishment in your crying is happiness." Ibid., 710.

### 3.2.2 Genesis and Structure

The civic and celebratory intent behind the writing of *La mayor corona* is evident. The story of the martyr of Seville gave Lope the chance to address issues of political and religious actuality. The author was aware that former King Philip II (1556-1598), father of ruling monarch Philip III, had been devoted to Hermenegildo and that the Pope had recently beatified him; he also knew that the cult of the saint was already widespread in Seville; therefore he understood well that the martyrdom of San Hermenegildo carried potential public success. Public devotion for a specific personage, regardless of his official status as saint, was often the main reason why playwrights picked the topic of his life and death. Elisa Aragone Terni explains how it was common for the playwrights of the Golden Age to take the liberty to beatify in the literary realm characters who had entered the collective imaginary of the masses:

È stato giustamente osservato che certi drammaturghi spagnoli –tra i quali, naturalmente, il nostro Lope- si presero la libertà di canonizzare *motu proprio* certi personaggi che godettero di larga popolarità per le loro doti eccezionali. Bisogna però riconoscere che si tratta di individui che erano già stati, in certo qual modo, canonizzati a *furor di popolo* –come spesso era avvenuto nella Chiesa primitiva- tanto erano noti e cari alla società in mezzo alla quale erano vissuti.”<sup>220</sup>

Lope was aware and fully exploited the widespread devotion to a saint by using popular saints as topic of his plays. In 1605, he rushed to compose *El Rustico del cielo*, a work based on the life of

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<sup>220</sup> “It has been rightly noted that some Spanish dramatists (among them Lope) took the liberty to ‘canonize’ certain personages who were very popular for their exceptional qualities. However, it is important to notice that those were individuals who had been already collectively ‘canonized’ by the people (as it used to happen in the primitive Church) because they were dear and widely known to the society where they lived.” Aragone Terni, 83.

Francisco de Alcalá, who had passed away only one year earlier. The fact that Philip III showed special devotion for de Alcalá, together with his fame as saint, which was consolidated among the people while he was still alive, made the topic extremely apt for Lope.<sup>221</sup>

In the case of Hermenegildo's life, there was already a horizon of expectation, both among the theatergoers who had seen or heard about the 1590 performance in Seville, as well as among the readers of hagiographical literature. The papal beatification of Hermenegildo, together with the popular appeal of his story, made it an appealing topic for Lope. The canonization was of crucial importance because it renewed interest in the life of the saint, and it is proven that Lope wrote two of his best-known *comedias de santos*, *La niñez de San Isidro* and *La juventud de San Isidro*, after Isidro, the saint protector of Madrid, was canonized in 1622.<sup>222</sup> The playwright's concern with commercial success was one of the selecting criteria in his choosing what stories to write. In this regard, José Fernández Montesinos noted that only rarely Lope composed a *comedia de santo* "desinteresadamente," that is, without wanting to pursue a secondary end.<sup>223</sup> This does not undermine the fact that Lope believed strongly in the religious and political establishment that such plays represented and supported; it only stresses that playwriting was for Lope a career that was going to thrive and last only and exclusively on the basis of popular consensus. Seeking constant theatrical success had more to do with the playwright's survival than his artistic freedom. Since the clergy and civic authorities often commissioned the *comedias de santos* as part of a number of events celebrating the saint, the success of the performance influenced whether the writer would be asked again to write other plays. Explaining the nature of this commission and its reflection of the genre of the *comedias de*

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<sup>221</sup> María Cruz García de Enterría, "Hagiografía popular y comedias de santos," *La comedia de magia y de santos*, F.J. Blasco, E. Caldera, J. Alvarez Barrientos, and R. de la Fuente, eds. (Madrid: Ediciones Júcar, 1992), 81.

<sup>222</sup> Elaine Canning, 48-49.

<sup>223</sup> José Fernández Montesinos, *Bar Jos*, 209.

*santos*, Aragone Terni explains that this type of drama was “la più mercantile delle forme drammatiche, e, al tempo stesso, la più ingrata per l’autore, specie, quando si trattava piuttosto che di offerta, di domanda.”<sup>224</sup> Thomas Case points out how the nature of the celebration of which the *comedia* was a part influenced the writing of the play, highlighting once more the importance for the playwright to follow the commissioner’s guidelines in order to guarantee he would be hired in the future:

A *comedia de santos* meant to be a part of a series of celebrations designed for a seventeenth-century public in honor of the saint. It was purposefully written to fit in with other parts of the celebration of a saint. The faithful who showed up to see the celebrations and to participate in the commemoration of the saint, as well as the clerics who commissioned and paid for the play, were co-creators of the drama in what de Marinis calls the ‘dramaturgy of the spectator’.<sup>225</sup>

Historians do not have documentary evidence to determine whether Lope composed *La mayor corona* by commission or not, but either way, the playwright would have strived to achieve commercial success to secure his professional career. The subject matter of *La mayor corona* offered Lope an ideal story because it drew on the creation of the Spanish Catholic monarchy. Moreover, it fulfilled his interest in using historical material to establish a national patrimony based on the celebration of significant figures and historical events. The martyrdom of Hermenegildo was the perfect narrative vehicle to “celebrar personalidades, hechos y sentimientos históricos, y en profundizar la antigua leyenda, la tradición epica, el pasado de la patria y el tesoro de las creencias como común patrimonio nacional.”<sup>226</sup> As the story deals with

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<sup>224</sup> “...the most commercial of all dramatic forms, and, at the same time, the most thankless for the author, especially when it was the product of a demand, rather than an offer.” Aragone Terni, 56.

<sup>225</sup> Thomas E. Case, *Understanding Lope de Vega’s Comedias de Santos* *Ispanofila*, n. 125 (N.C.: Chapel Hill, 1999), 16 (11-22)

<sup>226</sup> “...celebrate important people, historical facts and sentiments, and deepen the old legend, the epic tradition, the past of the country and the treasure of beliefs as communal national patrimony.” Ludwig Pfandl, *Historia de la literatura nacional española el la Edad de Oro* (Barcelona, 1933), 429.

the dawning of Catholicism as the national religion in the Iberian Peninsula, it provided the unique opportunity to commemorate a foundational moment in Spanish history and honor the individual that secured religious unity. The martyrdom of Hermenegildo also offered the playwright numerous opportunities to establish a *trait d'union* between the strenuous defense of the saint against religious deviance, and Philip III and Margaret's defense of the purity of the Catholic doctrine, reinforced with their expulsion of the Moors in 1609.

There are other theories that might explain why Lope de Vega wrote a play about Hermenegildo. It is quite possible that Lope had heard about the saint through his friend and colleague Juan de Arguijo, one of the three playwrights working on the 1590 representation of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* in Seville. Arguijo and Lope became close friends during one of Lope's many stays in Seville. According to Robert Morrison, Lope was in Seville in 1582 and "spent much of his time there between 1600 and 1604."<sup>227</sup> The bond between the two artists was strong, and it lasted their entire lives. Even when Arguijo ended up bankrupt and resorted to living in the House of Professions of the Jesuits, Lope kept in contact with his friend, dedicating plays and poetic compositions to him.<sup>228</sup> It could be that Lope developed an interest in this story after discussing the Sevillian representation with his friend Arguijo, who had been personally involved in the process of writing it. Alternatively, it is fathomable that Lope attended the 1590 presentation, saw how powerfully that story worked on stage, and consequently, decided to write his own version of the story for the *comedia* stage in Madrid.

Since *La mayor corona* was most likely written and staged at the end of the first decade of the 1600s, it is also reasonable to think that Lope might have been inspired to compose it after

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<sup>227</sup> Robert Morrison, 80.

<sup>228</sup> A. Garzon-Blanco, 46-49.



attending a second production of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* which took place in the Jesuit college of San Hermenegildo of Seville in 1606.<sup>229</sup>

The fact that Lope studied with the Jesuits at the Colegio Imperial in Madrid from 1572 to 1574, and experienced first hand the theatrical sensibility and rhetorical ideology of the Society of Jesus, also substantiates the Lopean authorship of *La mayor corona*. Who would have been better suited to tackle the quintessential stage trope of the Society of Jesus than a former student of a Jesuit college? Talking about the similarities between the theatrical output of the Jesuits and that of Lope and other Spanish playwrights of the time, Garcia Soriano explains that “a vista de las representaciones universitarias y de colegio se despertó la imaginación de los que fueron luego nuestros más geniales escritores y dramaturgos.”<sup>230</sup> The imaginative suggestions of the *teatro de colegio* in general, together with the incredible success of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* might have exerted a great fascination on Lope de Vega and motivated him to compose his own account of the martyr the Jesuits had chosen to represent their theological and political agendas.

The dramaturgical structure of *La mayor corona* bridges three of the four subgroups (*el mendicante, el convertido, el hacedor de milagros, and el mártir* –the beggar, the converted, the miracle maker, and the martyr) in which Elma Dassbach has categorized the Golden Age *comedia hagiográfica*. Hermenegildo is a *convertido* because at the beginning of the play he is portrayed as a follower of the Arianistic ideas of his father, and converts to Catholicism only after listening to Ingunda’s teachings and witnessing her devoted behavior. According to Dassbach, there are two modalities of conversion in this type of *comedia de santos*, one is

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<sup>229</sup> Alonso Asenjo, 474.

<sup>230</sup> “The imagination of our most genial writers and dramatists was shaped by the university and college theatrical representations.” Justo Garcia Soriano, “El teatro de colegio en España” *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*, 14 (1927), 276.

reflexive and gradual (“reflexiva y gradual”) while the other is sudden and proactive (“bien repentina e intervencionista”). Hermenegildo’s belongs to the second group because he has already accepted the Catholic faith by the end of act I, when he hears Ingunda conversing with a celestial voice. Although Lope does not reveal Hermenegildo’s conversion until the middle of act II in order to maintain the suspense about the true intentions of the prince, the reader knows that he has converted long before he announces publicly to the people of Seville. Dassbach also includes persecutions and temptations as strategies to complicate the spiritual path of the saint, and celestial apparitions as signifiers of the spiritual aid he receives during his journey to sanctity. Hermenegildo is both persecuted by his father, and tempted by Orosio, Bada, Lisipa, Recaredo, and Leovigildo. Nevertheless, the Angel comes to assist and comfort him. At the end of act II, the Angel helps Hermenegildo escape Seville on a flying machine after the annihilation of his troops, and in act II the Angel comes to console him after they take away Ingunda, and reminds him of his glorious destiny as savior of Spain.

Hermenegildo is partially a *hacedor de milagros* because his sanctity is not established through his performing miraculous acts but through his martyrdom. Nevertheless, he performs miracles in the aftermath of his death by bringing about the sudden conversion of his family and the subsequent one of his entire country. He also restores Cardillo’s sight in the last scene of the play. Although those miracles are not what secure Hermenegildo’s sanctity, as that is a consequence of his martyrdom, they surely display the redemptive powers associated with his death. This is especially evident in the verbal exchange between Hermenegildo and Recaredo at the end of the play, when the saint shows his understanding of the impact his martyrdom will have on his brother’s future:

En tus brazos  
Salgo a morir, Recaredo,  
para que te dé mi sangre  
divino conocimiento  
de la verdad por quien vivo,  
cuando imaginas que muero.<sup>231</sup>

Hermenegildo's blood has the power to redeem and save Recaredo, which is a miraculous event that happens after the saint's death instead of during his life.

*La mayor corona* also represents the figure of the *mártir* for the obvious reason that Hermenegildo accepts his martyrdom rather than renounce his religious beliefs.

### **3.2.3 *Mundo and cielo: differences and similarities between religious and political discourses***

This first section addresses the specific characteristics of Hermenegildo as martyr, as well as the ways in which Lope bridges the gap between monarchical and papal authorities created by *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* by proposing a less polarized vision of the world and deploying the structural elements of the Spanish *comedia*.

Elena Dassbach describes the value of the martyr's death as both a highly desirable purpose and the indisputable confirmation of his true faith:

La muerte viene al final, para probar que la persona está verdaderamente convertida, sus pecados perdonados, y que Dios le ha favorecido con el martirio como una pronta manera de alcanzar la santidad.

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<sup>231</sup> "In your arms, Recaredo, I come to die, so that my blood may give you the divine understanding of the truth for which I live, just when you think I am dying." Lope de Vega, *La mayor corona*, 723.

Además de morir por la fe cristiana, los mártires exhiben con frecuencia una actitud similar hacia el martirio. Todos ellos desean morir y expresan júbilo cuando se les somete a torturas y se les sentencia a muerte.<sup>232</sup>

After his conversion, Hermenegildo begins to manifest his desire for the higher crown awarded to those who maintain their faith to the Catholic religion. He creates a dichotomous opposition between *cielo*, the representation of all that is good, and *mundo*, the place where evil doing reigns supreme. Heaven is the only place that rewards justice and moral truth and for this reason the saint longs for it:

Porque en el mundo jamás  
Se premiaron las verdades  
En le cielo está su premio  
Y de él es bien que se guarde,  
No del mundo, que acredita  
Mentiras y falsedades.<sup>233</sup>

The crown that Leovigildo is offering Hermenegildo in exchange for his acceptance of the Arianistic heresy is also an expression of the *mundo* that Hermenegildo is rejecting as part of his journey to heaven. Lope depicts it as void of substance; unable to carry real significance in the spiritual world that Hermenegildo inhabits. The common Golden Age metaphor of human life as a dream, made famous by Calderon's 1636 *La vida es sueño*, emerges in Lope's play with the association of the secular kingdom to the fragility and transparent appearance of the glass:

Yo había de condenarme

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<sup>232</sup> "Death comes at the end to confirm that the person has truly converted, that his sins have been forgiven, and that God showed him his favor with the martyrdom, as a way to achieve sanctity. Besides dying for the Christian faith, martyrs often exhibit a similar attitude towards martyrdom. They all desire to die and express joy when they are subjected to torture, as well as when they are sentenced to death." Dassbach, 53-54.

<sup>233</sup> "Truth is never rewarded in the world. Its reward is to be found in heaven, and it is good to confide in heaven, not in the world which gives credit to lies and hypocrisy." Lope de Vega, *La mayor corona*, 700.

Por cosa que apenas es  
Sombra leve y vidrio fragíl?  
Sin mi católica fe  
Todo el reino es incostante,  
Todo es embeleco y sueño.<sup>234</sup>

The use of the nouns *embeleco* and *sueño* speaks of the transient and ephemeral nature of political power, and, paradoxically, it posits essential doubts on its very existence by equating it to a dream. The same concept recurs in act II, where Hermenegildo reiterates the image of the Spanish monarchy as a shadow and a dream (“Sombra ha sido y sueño ha sido”). The relationship between reality and illusion in *La mayor corona* is complex, and laden with the many religious and cultural suggestions of the Baroque, which allowed the free interplay of reality and appearance:

La sociedad barroca se siente cómoda en un mundo de realidad y apariencia, que por otra parte parece asombrar al hombre contemporáneo, con su insistente búsqueda de la certeza. Para el hombre del siglo seventeenth, la respuesta a todo fenómeno inexplicable es más sencilla: será magia o milagro. La verdad poco importa, pues, en ultimo término, como bien indicaba Don Quijote, todo parece ser cosa de encantadores.<sup>235</sup>

In *La mayor corona*, reality and illusion coexist, rather than being in opposition to one another, and they assume each other’s epistemological and linguistic significances. Due to this exchange, what is real becomes an illusion, and what is illusionary turns into the real: Cardillo can see in spite of the fact that he is blind, while Bada and Lísipa claim to be blind even though they can see; Hermenegildo lives by dying, while the heretic characters are dead although they

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<sup>234</sup> “Should I damn myself for something that is just a trifling shadow and a fragile glass? Without my Catholic faith, the entire kingdom is ephemeral, everything is deceit and dream.” *Ibid.*, 701.

<sup>235</sup> “Baroque society is comfortable in a world of reality and appearance, which disturbs the contemporary society that is always pursuing certainty. For the seventeenth century man, the answer to all inexplicable phenomena was simpler: it was either magic or miracle. The truth was not that important because, as Don Quixote reminded, everything seems to be the work of enchanters.” Elma Dassbach, “Las artes mágicas y los sucesos milagrosos en las comedias de santos,” *Hispania*, Vol. 82, No. 3, (Sep., 1999), 433.

live. This apparent confusion is acceptable because Lope's theatrical world establishes as tangible reality the presence of celestial voices, angelic creatures, personification of dogmatic truths, and questions reality itself by doubting the materiality of actual objects such as the crown. As Hermenegildo gets closer to his own martyrdom, the separation between reality and illusion gradually becomes more blurred. He is approaching his heavenly destiny, therefore he can clearly 'see' the spiritual crown while at the same time he can now hardly make out the material one Leovigildo is offering him. The notion of reality and illusion as parts of the same epistemological equation reflects directly the Golden Age notion of *theatrum mundi*, which perceives the physical world and all human activities as quintessentially theatrical. Lope de Vega tackles this topic in *Lo fingido verdadero*, a *comedia de santos* based on the martyrdom of actor Genesius during the reign of Diocletianus. In this play the boundaries between reality and illusion are completely obliterated by the fact that historically the real execution of Genesius might have happened on the very stage where he was performing, at the end of his performance in the role of a Christian.

In *La mayor corona*, the highly theatrical mobility of the crown reflects its fugacity and impermanence. The crown is constantly moving from one head to another, and passes through many hands throughout the play. In act I, Recaredo, who is jealous of his brother because he is going to receive both the crown and Ingunda, puts the crown on his head, and as a reaction Teosindo, Rodulfo, and Ormindo kneel at his feet as if he was the legitimate king:

ORMINDO	Tan gran majestad La corona te ha infundido Que alegres nos ha movido A adorarte.
RECAREDO	Levantad.
RODULFO	¡Viva el gran rey Recaredo!

RECAREDO            ¡Vive Dios, que os mate!  
 TEOSINDO            Espera.  
 RECAREDO            ¡Ah corona lisonjera,  
                           Muerto entre tus puntas quedo!  
                           Con ellas llevas la palma  
                           (*Habla con la corona*)  
                           de mi invicto corazón.  
                           Pero no es mucho, si son  
                           Puntas que pasan el alma.  
                           Burlando infundes en mí  
                           Otro espíritu, aunque injusto,  
                           Pues me allegro y tengo gusto  
                           De que éstos me honren así.  
                           A sus voces lisonjeras  
                           Por ti crédito estoy dando.<sup>236</sup>

The crown carries a power that affects and changes people. It appears to confer dignity to the person that wears it, and elicit reverence in the bystanders, but in reality, it confers a majesty that is only superficial because it is not substantiated by the moral qualities the king should possess. The glamour and prestige of the crown confuses the guards to such an extent that they perceive Recaredo as being the king by the mere fact he is wearing it. They are mystified to the point of forgetting to deliver the crown to Leovigildo and that Recaredo is not suitable for being king because he is the second-born. The supernatural and negative power of the crown is clear also in light of Recaredo's reaction. At first, the prince refuses the adulatory comments of the guards, but soon after, he cannot refrain from feeling flattered and starts courting the idea of becoming king. When he finally regains his faculties, he explodes in an accusation against the crown, calling it 'monster', and 'origin of tyranny' (¡Bien dicen, monstruo, que en ti / Comenzó

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<sup>236</sup> "ORMINDO: The crown gave you such great majesty that we gladly felt moved to worship you.

RECAREDO: Raise!

RODULFO: Hail the great king Recaredo!

RECAREDO: As God lives, I will kill you!

TEOSINDO: Wait.

RECAREDO: Oh flattering crown, (*talking to the crown*) I fall dead in the middle of your points! You win over my undefeated heart with them. But it is not much to suffer if they are points that go through the soul. You infuse in me another sentiment, one that is unjust. Nevertheless, I am happy and enjoy the fact that they honor me so. Because of you I believe their flattering voices." Lope de Vega, *La mayor corona*, 665.

la tiranía! / Pero no he de ser tirano / Si en ti la ambición estriba).<sup>237</sup> When Recaredo appears in front of Leovigildo wearing the crown on his head, Leovigildo snatches it away to put it on Hermenegildo's head ("Porque primero ha nacido, / Loco, para coronarlo, / De la frente te la quito.")<sup>238</sup> The crown continues its perpetual motion from different heads and hands in act II. Here, Recaredo gives the crown to Hermenegildo during the coronation ceremony, and Hermenegildo lays it on the ground after his public conversion in front to of the people of Seville:

Que estimo y precio  
Más ser cristiano que ser  
Dueño de España sin serlo  
Le dirás, y por que veas  
Lo poco que perder siento  
La que tú adoras y estimas,  
En mis pies la pongo, hacienda  
En acto tan generoso  
De ella tan alto desprecio.  
Y dile que así la estimo  
(*Echa la corona en el suelo*)<sup>239</sup>

In act III, the crown changes position again when Leovigildo puts it on Recaredo's head and makes him king, in one last attempt to humiliate Hermenegildo. It is plausible to assume that Lope wanted to underline the capricious nature of political power, as well as its ambiguous effects on people, by stressing the constant passing of the crown. Moreover, by associating the monarchy with dreams and shadows, he seems to suggest the ineffectuality of the institution, which lacks the capacity to affect reality and carry any meaningful and lasting value.

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<sup>237</sup> "Oh monster, they are right when they say that tyranny started with you. But I must not be a tyrant if the ambition lies in you." Ibid., 665.

<sup>238</sup> "You are crazy! I take it away from your head to crown him who was born first." Ibid., 668.

<sup>239</sup> "I deem more valuable being a Christian than being master of Spain without being a Christian. After you watch it, you will tell him (Leovigildo) how little I care about the thing that you adore. I will put it (the crown) on the ground, showing with such a generous act the disregard I have for it. (*Puts the crown on the floor*)." Ibid., 686.



However, this interpretation of the crown as symbol of an unstable political power should not lead to a sweeping generalization about Lope's conception of monarchical power. The historian should not forget that Leovigildo is the monarch Lope talks about in *La mayor corona*: a heretical king who wants to impose his beliefs on his subjects, and orders the murders of both his grandson and son. While it is obvious that Lope looks at Christendom as an ideal to pursue, he is also deeply concerned with the intertwined connections between temporal and spiritual powers in the Spain of his times. Lope associates the authority and legality of the monarchy with its embracing Catholicism, thus challenging the legitimacy of anti-Catholic rulers. Catholicism is what confers substantive morality, grants authority, and guarantees the longevity of any government.

La Monarquía española  
Vale, su precio es notable;  
Pero advierte que sin fe  
Pesa mucho y nada vale.<sup>240</sup>

The saint's desire to die, the marking of his death as proof of his sanctity, and the doubts advanced on the legitimacy of the anti-Catholic monarchy are trademarks of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* and offer opportunities to analogize *La mayor corona* to its Jesuit antecedent. Did Lope mean to support the same political agendas of the Society of Jesus? Is Lope underwriting the same sacrificial ideology of the Jesuit when he has Hermenegildo say "Vivir muriendo / Será aquí el triunfo mayor. / Este es cristiano valor"?<sup>241</sup> Did he exploit the same dramaturgical underpinnings in order to pander to the Counter Reformation's propagandistic objectives?

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<sup>240</sup> "The Spanish monarchy is valuable, and its price is high. However, without faith, it weighs much but it is worth nothing." Ibid., 702.

<sup>241</sup> "To live while dying: this will be the greatest triumph. This is a Christian value." Ibid., 695.

Lope does not dwell on the opposition between Pope and King, instead he concentrates on the encomiastic portrayal of the Spanish royal family, which was of course Catholic. The play does not espouse the idea that Leovigildo is a tyrant because he is a follower of Arius, nor does it suggest that Leovigildo should be deposed because he is a heretic, and a despot. The issue is not even raised in *La mayor corona*. The play altogether avoids the topic of tyrannicide and regicide, and employs the words tyrant and tyranny only sparingly. Recaredo utilizes the word *tiranía* in act one to explain that the excessive desire for the crown produced tyranny, and Ingunda mentions the word *tirano* in relationship with Hermenegildo who is keeping her captive at the beginning of act II.

Y si por esta verdad  
Tirano, presa me tienes,  
No esperes de mí otra cosa  
Ni otro propósito esperes.  
Dame la muerte, que en mí  
Es triunfo inmortal la muerte.<sup>242</sup>

Nevertheless, *La mayor corona* defuses the relevance of tyranny by multiplying the possible semantic applications of the word, and using it outside of its eminently political signification. Hermenegildo references the noun *tiranía* when talking about how monarchy exerts its tyranny over him by keeping him apart from Ingunda.

¡Ay, Ingunda! ¡Ay, esposa mía! ¡Ay, prenda mía!  
Estos fieros enojos,  
Gloria y gusto son a vuestros ojos,  
Y la prision soberbia Monarquía. La dulce tiranía  
De su cristal confieso,  
Que indigno y corto amor me tiene preso,  
Y así en amantes lazos,

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<sup>242</sup> “If it is for this belief that you, tyrant, keep me captive, then do not expect anything else from me. Give me death because that is immortal triumph for me.” Ibid., 681.

Troquemos las cadenas por los brazos.<sup>243</sup>

A similar use of the word tyranny in a metaphorical or analogical fashion is evident in act III. Here Lísipa defines as “tirano amor” the feeling she has for Hermenegildo, and which she cannot fight.<sup>244</sup> In all four cases, Lope voids the word tyranny of the highly political significance it held in *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, and he utilizes it in the more daily and mundane contexts of Hermenegildo and Ingunda’s relationship, Recaredo’s courting the idea of becoming king one day, as well as the unrequited love of Lísipa for Hermenegildo.

Unlike *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, *La mayor corona* does not intend to investigate regicide as a strategy to define the relationship between the Vatican and the monarch and establish the subordination of the State to the Church. The focal point of the play is Hermenegildo’s transformation from heretic to Christian, not his opposition to the illegitimate ruling of his father. In the 1590 Jesuits’ version of Hermenegildo’s martyrdom, the Pope is a powerful presence. Although he never appears on stage as a character, the Cardinal and Leandro represent Gregory the Great’s will and his vision for a Catholic Spain by guaranteeing the Vatican spiritual and material support. Instead, Lope de Vega was interested in presenting a less polarized, and safer world. For this reason, he eradicates the papal influence from his play, and eliminates all the Roman characters. By ignoring even the possibility of a contrast between the pope and king and highlighting the presence of Spanish Catholic monarchy, Lope can freely point out what mattered the most to him: the Spanish royal family. In act III, the Angel establishes a direct connection between Hermenegildo’s martyrdom and the future of Spain as a Catholic country:

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<sup>243</sup> “Oh Ingunda! Oh my wife and salvation! These hardships are glory and pleasures to your eyes, and the prison is sovereign monarchy. I confess that I find its tyranny sweet because an undignified and short-lived love keeps me captive and for this reason we turn the chains that tie the arms in loving bonds.” Ibid., 706.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 719.

Al fin, por ti y por tu esposa  
Logrará la Iglesia santa  
En España eternamente  
Cristianísimo monarcas,  
que, con el sacro apellido  
de católicos, deshagan,  
como el sol, oscuras nieblas  
de apostates heresiarcas.  
Y aunque por pecados suyos  
Triunfe por traidoras armas,  
De España ahora, habrá reyes<sup>245</sup>  
Siempre de tu ilustre casa.

The outcome of the saint's death, which is the conversion of Spain to Catholicism at the end of sixth century, is what interests Lope. In the following verses, he immediately connects Hermenegildo's martyrdom with the arrival in Spain of the house of Hapsburgs, from which the royal family descended:

Que tu fe amparará en ella,  
Y, por deberle a los Austrias,  
Dios esta sangre que tiene  
Rubies que su Iglesia labran,  
Los trasladarán a imperio  
Con siempre heroicas hazañas,  
con memorables virtudes  
y inmortales alabanzas.  
Entre ellos venera ahora  
Estos dos sacros jerarcas,  
Que de tu esposa y de ti  
Han de ser vivas estampas.  
Llamarase Hermenegildo,  
Como tu, y ella, del nácar  
De Alemania, Margarita,  
Y perla preciosa y sacra.  
Estos dos ángeles bellos

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<sup>245</sup> "Finally, because of you and your spouse, the holy Church in Spain will always have Christian monarchs, who with the holy name of Catholic will dissipate, like the sun, the dark clouds of apostate heretics. And even though now they triumph with their sins and treacherous armies, Spain will always have kings descending from your house." *Ibid.*, 713.

Que a ti y a Ingunda retratan,  
De los años mismos vuestros,  
Buscarán eterna patria.<sup>246</sup>

The presence of the Spanish monarchs and their child on stage mirrors that of Hermenegildo, Ingunda, and their son, thus drawing and inviting analogies between the two families. The stage direction says “Aparecerá en lo alto Felipe Tercero, y Margarita en dos sillas, y en otra, un poquito más abajo, Felipe Cuarto, con sitial, poniendo la corona los dos.”<sup>247</sup> This scene actualizes the historical ties existing between the two families, and the similarities existing between their respective religious and political programs. It also underlines that Hermenegildo’s worthy sacrifice for his country and people carries contemporary significance, not simply historical relevance. The blending of past and present in this scene gives the entire play a more conciliatory tone because it stresses the religious continuity of Spanish monarchical genealogy, without drawing attention to the ideological confrontation between the Pope and anti-Catholic kings. More importantly, it reaffirms the legitimacy and rightful sovereignty of the house of Austria to rule in Spain by establishing its clear connection to Hermenegildo, the Visigoth prince who refused to be king but produced, nevertheless, a genealogy of Catholic kings. This was a politically significant choice in the seventeenth century because the Spanish monarchy felt “una preocupación particular por legitimar la imagen sacral de la casa de Austria,” especially in light of the fact that it could not count on “un rey español que contraponer a San Luis, rey de Francia,

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<sup>246</sup> “Your faith will take shelter in it. In addition, thanks to the Austrians, this blood that contains the rubies that shape the Church, they will translate into an empire. Always with heroic enterprises, memorable virtues, and immortal praises among them they now worship two leaders who are the living images of you and your wife. He will be called Hermenegildo, just like you, and she will be named Margarita, a precious and rare pearl and the mother-of-pearl of Germany. These two beautiful angels who resemble you and Ingunda are also the same age of you two, will find eternal country.” *Ibid.*, 713.

<sup>247</sup> “It will appear in the high part of the stage Philip III and Margaret sitting on two chairs and crowned. Philip IV will sit on a lower level on a seat of honor.” *Ibid.*, 713.

en un contexto de creciente tensión entre las dos monarquías y de rivalidad por asumir el liderazgo entre los príncipes católicos.”<sup>248</sup>

The emphasis on political discourse is not the only issue that separates *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* and *La mayor corona*. The scope and reach of these two plays differ greatly also because of their different target audiences, and their dramaturgical conventions, limits, and liberties. While it is undeniable that *La mayor corona* partakes of the same cultural and religious environment that sees Catholic orthodoxy as the only acceptable set of beliefs, it is also true that its principal scope was that of entertaining a public composed of women and men of different classes, age, education, and census. While the aim of the Jesuit playwright was that of entertaining his audience to make the spiritual lesson more effective and pertinent, the professional writers of *comedias* never lost track of the central relevance of entertaining the paying spectators. Lope had made this point clear in his 1609 *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*, a groundbreaking treatise about writing successful comedies for the stage. Here, he clarifies his personal credo that pleasing the audience is more important than following preconceived rules based on the dramaturgical conventions of classical theatre.

Y cuando he de escribir una comedia,  
Encierro los preceptos con seis llaves;  
Saco a Terencio y Plauto de mi studio,  
Para que no me den voces (que suele  
Dar gritos la verdad en libros mudos),  
Y escribo por el arte que inventaron  
Los que el vulgar aplauso pretendieron,  
Porque, como las paga el vulgo, es justo  
Hablarle en necio para darle gusto. (vv. 40-48)

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<sup>248</sup> “...a particular preoccupation to legitimize the sacred image of the House of Austria.” “...a Spanish king to oppose to Saint Louis, King of France, in a context of growing tension between the two nations and rivalry over who will get the leadership of the Catholic princes.” Antonio Álvarez-Osorio Alvariño, in *Homenaje a Henri Guerreiro*, 243.

Sustento, en fin, lo que escribí, y conozco  
Que, aunque fueran mayor de otra manera,  
No tuvieran el gusto que han tenido,  
Porque a veces lo que es contra lo justo  
Por la misma razón deleita el gusto. (vv. 372-376) <sup>249</sup>

In his plays, Lope changed historical facts, took the liberty to introduce characters and events, and changed the natural setting of the play to add color, exoticism, and appeal to a larger audience. For instance, in *Los primeros mártires del Japón*, he calls the Japanese people *indios*, transforms the naturally cold climate of Japan into a tropical one, and adds animals that do not exist in the area.<sup>250</sup> In *Las almenas de Toro*, Lope's 1620 version of the story of the Cid, the playwright poeticizes the historical details, and draws heavily on "anachronisms and inventiveness."<sup>251</sup> In brief, Lope does not consider history as a monolithic authority that should dictate the writing of his plays and their staging. Just like the other major playwrights of the time, he manipulates, changes, and brings up to date the context of the story in order to appeal to the contemporary taste:

Característica constante de la comedias hispánica era su falta de perspectiva histórica. Sus autores no concebían más que una época: la propia. ... Estos anacronismos, que hoy nos resultan un tanto burdos, tenían la virtud de aproximar los hechos y personajes más diversos por su época y procedencia a la sensibilidad contemporánea. Con ello, sin duda, la obra ganaba vida, pero perdía universalidad.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> "And when I have to write a comedy I secure all precepts with six locks. I remove Plautus and Terence from my office so that they cannot speak to me (the truth shouts from deaf books) and I write for the art that was invented by those who work for the public applause. Because, since it's the public that pays, it is only fair to please them." "Finally, I sustain what I wrote, and although I know that would have been of better written in another way, they would not have been liked by the public the same way, because, sometimes, what goes against the right, pleases the taste for this same reason."

<sup>250</sup> Alois Richard Nykl, "*Los Primeros Mártires del Japón and Triunfo de la fe en los Reinos del Japón*," *Modern Philology*, Vol. 22, No. 3, (Feb., 1925), 315 (305-323)

<sup>251</sup> Robert Lauer, "The Use and Abuse of History in the Spanish Theater of the Golden Age: The Regicide of Sancho II as Treated by Juan de la Cueva, Guillén de Castro, and Lope de Vega," *Hispanic Review*, Vol. 56, No. 1. (Winter, 1988), 28. (17-37)

<sup>252</sup> "The recurrent characteristic of Hispanic comedy was its lack of historical perspective. Its authors could conceive only one time: their own. These anachronisms, which nowadays are considered coarse, had the virtue to bring closer

The playwright is also known for his use of the subplot, a fictionalized story that develops simultaneously with the main historical narrative.<sup>253</sup> He introduces a subplot that does not interfere with, nor modify, the historical events he describes, but that merely functions as a strategy to complicate and dramatize the plot.<sup>254</sup> This is evident in *La mayor corona* with the characters of Lísipa and Bada, whose roles are independent from the main plot.

Lope updates and manipulates religious stories from the Bible and hagiographical literature in order to include some of tenets that attracted people to the *corrales*: love, female characters, honor, theatre machines and spectacular effects, and finally suspenseful and macabre revelations. In *La mayor corona*, the playwright draws fully on the popular themes of love by portraying the exemplary spousal love of Hermenegildo and Ingunda, and describing the dangers placed on this relationship by Recaredo's jealousy. The couple Hermenegildo-Ingunda is central to the story, and it is clear from the beginning that true love, both physical and spiritual, binds the two characters together. In act I, Hermenegildo undresses in a hurry because he is impatient to spend his first night with Ingunda. Hermenegildo is annoyed when Leovigildo interrupts him to tell him that Ingunda is a Catholic, and his first reaction is to dismiss his father, thus he asks Teosindo to tell Leovigildo that he is already in Ingunda's company: "Decid que recogido / Con

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to the contemporary sensibility facts and characters diverse for their time periods and origin. Because of this, the work gained life but lost universality." Delfín Leocadio Garasa, 8.

<sup>253</sup> "Al hacerlo así él seguía la tendencia a encontrar una nueva clase de unidad de acción en esa complejidad unificada que caracteriza a su teatro, en contraste con la informe multiplicidad de acciones en el siglo XVI y con la severa simplicidad del drama clasicista." ("By doing this, he followed the tendency to find a new sense of unity of action in the unified complexity that characterizes his theatre, in opposition to the unshaped multiple plots of the XVI century, as well as to the severe simplicity of classical drama"). Diego Marin, *La intriga secundaria en el teatro de Lope de Vega* (Mexico: Ediciones de Andrea, 1958), 20.

<sup>254</sup> "Cuando Lope dramatiza el material de una fuente histórica o legendaria con le propósito serio de (digámoslo parafraseando el dicho clasico) 'ensalzar deleitando' y no meramente de 'deleitar', se suele atener estrictamente al asunto dado, superponiéndole una intriga secundaria de su invención, pero sin mezclarla con aquél." ("When Lope dramatizes a legendary or historical source with the intent to 'glorify while entertaining' (to use a classic saying) and not simple to 'entertain', he usually conforms strictly to the source superimposing a secondary plot of his invention that never mizes with the main one"). Ibid., 31.



mi esposa estoy ya” (“Tell him that I have retired and I am already with my wife”). Even when he decides to see his father, Hermenegildo tries to cut the visit short by saying that he is already undressed: “Ya desnudo me veis” (“As you can tell, I am already undressed”).<sup>255</sup> It is evident by the speed with which he undresses himself, and his initial conversation with Leovigildo that Hermenegildo can hardly wait to consummate his first love night with Ingunda. When his father expects him to “Repudiar y no hacer caso de Ingunda” (“Send Ingunda away and forget about her”), Hermenegildo is firm in his refusal:

Ya es Ingunda mi mujer;  
Ya la adoro, estimo, y amo,  
Y será, el morir por ella,  
Eternal vida y descanso.  
Ya resistirme no puedo;  
Vos me la disteis. Culpado  
Estáis solamente vos  
En este impensado caso.  
Remediarlo es imposible;  
Más será posible, amando  
Y persuadiendo, vencerla,  
Que amor nace en los halagos.<sup>256</sup>

The playwright states the overpowering love Hermenegildo feels for his wife repeatedly throughout the play. It is the force that prevents Hermenegildo from shunning her, in spite of the fact that he is conscious about the prophecy that predicted a woman would cause his death. Lope portrays Hermenegildo and Ingunda as sharing a strong bond that is physical in act I, and more spiritual in the following two. He describes the couple and their child as a *familia*, and he is not afraid to investigate the nature of their physical and spiritual relationship. It is interesting that

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<sup>255</sup> Lope de Vega, *La mayor corona*, 672.

<sup>256</sup> “Ingunda is already my wife. I adore her, esteem her, and love her. Dying for her will be eternal life and rest. I cannot resist her. You gave her to me. You are the only guilty person, and to fix this case is impossible. It will be more likely to win her over by loving, and persuading her, because love grows in compliments.” *Ibid.*, 674.

Hermenegildo reacts to Cardillo's misogynistic speech with a statement that cut to the core of stereotypical assumptions of female behavior: "...que el venire a ser / Buena o mala la mujer / consiste solo en el hombre."<sup>257</sup> His statement is clearly filtered through his infatuation for Ingunda, which prevents him from seeing anything imperfect in her.

Lope de Vega could address the topic of familial and even sensual love for two reasons. He was noticeably freer in writing his play than the Jesuit playwrights of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, who had to comply with the strict rules of the *Ratio Studiorum*, as well as with the didactic expectations of the *teatro de colegio*. Secondly, he could rely on actresses to play female roles, a fact that the public perceived as less threatening than having two male college students representing a heterosexual couple in love. By allowing women to play female characters, the stage of the *comedias de santos* avoided the insinuating dangers of homoerotic desire, which haunted the Jesuit theatre.<sup>258</sup>

Ingunda is both a beloved wife and a symbol of Mary, the mother of God who the post-Reformation Church had constructed as spiritual channel to ease the communication between God and men.<sup>259</sup> Her double identity is apparent in act III. When Hermenegildo discovers the murder of his child, he addresses Ingunda exclaiming "Sólo consolarme vos / podéis en pena tan fiera" ("You are the only one who can console me in this hardship"), stressing her motherly role as only consoler.<sup>260</sup> When she is forced to leave, Hermenegildo goes into a fit of uncontrollable desperation, and verbally attacks Recaredo and Américo who are taking her away from him. The general atmosphere of the scene reaffirms the spiritual tie that unites the spouses by emphasizing

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<sup>257</sup> "The goodness or evilness of the woman depends only on the man." Ibid., 660.

<sup>258</sup> The author will tackle the issue of gender playing in Jesuit theatre in chapter III.

<sup>259</sup> See Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001). The author investigates how the post-Tridentine Church redefines the figure of Mary according to its new needs, concentrating "more on her soul as religious life in Western Europe was increasingly dominated by a piety that stressed the inner life at the expense of the concrete and material.," viii.

<sup>260</sup> Lope de Vega, *La mayor corona*, 710.

the exemplarity of their behavior (“Y yo mi vida te dejo / Para que te infunda y dé / mi fortaleza y mi fe / como cristalino espejo.”)<sup>261</sup> The reader cannot help but notice that Hermenegildo’s first reaction is one of anguish and hopelessness, while that of Ingunda is consolatory, and reassuring. The dramatic energy that sustains their dialogue speaks of a man who is head over heels in love with his woman, and cannot tolerate not being with her, as well as of a woman who aspires to fortify her man’s wavering faith.

HERMENEGILDO	Esto es si licencia os doy. ¿No sabéis, viles, quién soy y que Ingunda es mi mujer? Y aun pore so la prendemos. ¡Vive Dios, que si llegáis....! ¡Basta! No basta. No hagáis, Dulce esposo, esos extremos, Que si mil vidas tuviera Las ofreciera por vos. Asidla y llevadla. Adiós. Ministro infernal, espera, Aguarda, mira que Ingunda Es mi alma; no la llevas. Oye. En tan heroicas pruebas Hoy tu paciencia se funda. ¡Ansí, mi Ingunda, me dejas? Crueldad parece. Señor, Antes es sombra de amor, Aunque de mi amor te quejas. Aquí importa ser cruel Para ser piadosa Espera Si aquí esperara, perdiera De esta Victoria el laurel. <sup>262</sup>
AMÉRICO	
HERMENEGILDO	
RECAREDO	
HERMENEGILDO	
INGUNDA	
RECAREDO	
INGUNDA	
HERMENEGILDO	
INGUNDA	
HERMENEGILDO	
INGUNDA	
HERMENEGILDO	
INGUNDA	

<sup>261</sup> “And I give my life to you so that like a crystal mirror may infuse you with my fortitude and faith.” Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> “HERMENEGILDO: This will happen only if I give you permission. Don’t you know who I am, and that Ingunda is my wife?”

The other two female characters also help dilute the religious content of the play by adding a touch of the secular *comedia*, the romantic intrigue. The main dramaturgical function of Bada and Lísipa is to reveal to the king that Ingunda is Catholic, but they also fuel the play with their jealousy, catty comments on Ingunda, and perfidious plan to seduce Hermenegildo. They are carriers of dangerous female seduction, and with their mere presence allude to the possibility, though remote, that Hermenegildo might fall from grace and betray his wife and religion. In act I, they are in a state of distress when they hear that Hermenegildo will marry Ingunda, and launch in a diatribe against the future bride-to-be:

BADA Celosa Vengo de aquesta mujer.  
LISIPA Y yo vengo corrida  
A apercibir mi muerte y mi partida.  
¡Que Ingunda sea casada!  
¡Que me hiciese Amor tan desdichada!  
BADA Ver no pienso las bodas,  
Que infierno han de ser sus fiestas todas  
LISIPA Aquí, en dolor tan fuerte,  
Nos podemos quejar de nuestra suerte.  
BADA ¡Que, siendo la postrera,  
Esta ingrata la suerte mereciera!

BADA ¡Que fuese la dichosa

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AMÉRICO: We do and we are still taking her.  
HERMENEGILDO: God knows that if you come closer....”  
RECAREDO: That’s enough!  
HERMENEGILDO: That’s not enough!  
INGUNDA: Sweet husband, do not lose control. If I had a thousand lives to give, I would offer them all to you.  
RECAREDO: Take her away.  
INGUNDA: Farewell.  
HERMENEGILDO: Wait, infernal minister, wait, and consider that Ingunda is my soul. Don’t take her away.  
Listen!  
INGUNDA: Today, your patience is founded in such heroic tests.  
HERMENEGILDO: You leave me like this, Ingunda. It seems cruel.  
INGUNDA: On the contrary, my Lord, it is a sign of love, even though you complain about my love. Now it is important to be cruel in order to be compassionate.  
HERMENEGILDO: Wait.  
INGUNDA: If I wait here, I will lose the reward of this victory.” Ibid., 711-712.

Esta ingrata fancesa! Estoy celosa  
 Y atrevida emprendiera  
 Cualquier agravio que en su daño fuera.  
 LISIPA      Francesa no la llames  
 Ni así la Gloria de su imperio infames,  
 Que es tigre de Hircania  
 Espíritu dio a Austria y Alemania.  
 Aspides de Borgoña  
 Que anega a España en tósigo y ponzoña.<sup>263</sup>

In act III, Bada and Lísipa return to try and seduce Hermenegildo with their wealth and possessions. While the presence of Bada and Lisipa might have tickled the imagination of the public, Lope epitomizes a perfected version of love with Hermenegildo and Ingunda, two loving spouses united by the binding force of the same faith.

Cardillo, the *grazioso* character of Spanish Golden Age drama, is also crucial to identifying the differences between *La mayor corona* and *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*. Spain's *comedia martiriológica* introduces the comic character of the *grazioso* (sometimes also called *lacayo*) for dramaturgical reasons and as a source of entertainment.<sup>264</sup> The *grazioso* is a comedic character that reflects and filters the emotions and responses of the audiences by turning the devotional and spiritual experience of the saint or martyr, into something the audience can understand, and with which it can sympathize. As a character, he facilitates the task of the

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<sup>263</sup> BADA: I am jealous of this woman.

LISIPA: And I come here embarrassed to confess my death and departure. I cannot believe that Ingunda is married! How could love make me so unfortunate!

BADA: I am not attending the wedding. May all her celebrations be hell.

LISIPA: Here we can lament our bad luck.

BADA: To think that this ungrateful woman was the last of the brides and was so fortunate to be picked!

LISIPA: How could this unappreciative French be so lucky! I am so jealous and I will daringly undertake any offense to hurt her.

BADA: Do not call her French, nor utter the glory of her infamous empire, because it is a tiger of Hircania that God has given Austria and Germany. A snake of Borgogne that drowns Spain in venom and poison." Ibid., 661-662.

<sup>264</sup> For a detailed account of the *grazioso* in the religious plays of Lope de Vega check Robert Morrison, "Graziosos con Breviarios: The Comic Element in the *Comedia de Santos* of Lope de Vega," *Crítica Hispánica*, Vol. 12, 1990, 33-45. Morrison follows Morley and Bruerton's authentication so he does not include *La mayor corona* among Lope's *comedias de santos*. Nevertheless, this article provides a useful, if brief, survey of the presence of the *grazioso* in Lope's religious dramas.

playwright by simplifying difficult theological points for the audience. By eliciting laughter for his mistakes, errors, and gaffes, the *grazioso* also puts the spectators at ease with their own flaws.

One of the dramaturgical functions of the *grazioso* is to accompany the saint through his spiritual journey. He is a devoted companion who follows the saint's footsteps, even when he momentarily separates from him. In *La mayor corona*, Cardillo converts to Catholicism when Hermenegildo does, but then he converts to Arianism when Hermenegildo loses the war. In act III, he converts back to Catholicism again, and assumes some of the spiritual qualities showed by Hermenegildo. Ironically, since he is now blind, Cardillo can see clearly what will happen in the future and predicts to Hermenegildo that "... ya veo / Tu imagen en esta torre, / Y en ella un ilustre templo, / Donde Sevilla te adore, / Y me parece que rezo / Tus Milagros y tu vida."<sup>265</sup> At the very end of the play, Cardillo takes on the identity of the blind man of the Bible, who begs Christ to restore his sight when he says "¡Señor duélete de mí! / ¡Dame vista!" ("Lord, have pity of me. Give me my sight").<sup>266</sup> His role in making Hermenegildo into a saint, and reaffirming the theological centrality of the Trinitarian dogma can't be stressed enough. In fact, Hermenegildo replies to Cardillo's request for help by performing his first miracle as saint: "El cristal tierno / Baña en mi sangre y verás, / Pues de ella se esmaltó el suelo."<sup>267</sup> At the end of these lines, the Trinity appears to seal the miracle and end the play.

Even though both *La mayor corona* and *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* deal with the topic of Hermenegildo's martyrdom in the attempt to state the importance of dogmatic orthodoxy, the two plays are quite different. Dramaturgically, Lope's ample use of female characters, romantic intrigue, comedic characters, realistic depictions of spousal love, and a

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<sup>265</sup> "I already see your image in this tower, an illustrious temple where Seville worships you, and it appears as if I pray your miracles and life." *Ibid.*, 720.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, 724.

<sup>267</sup> "Wet your eyes in my blood that fell on the floor, and you will see." *Ibid.*, 724.

stronger emphasis on entertaining the audience bring *La mayor corona* close to Spanish Golden Age *comedia*. Ideologically, the two plays share the same belief that Catholicism is the only acceptable religion and that heresy should be fought against at all cost, however, *La mayor corona* endorses the necessary bond between Church and state, while *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* buttresses the superiority of the Pope over the king and suggests the legitimacy of regicide.

## 4.0 HERMENEGILDO IN ITALY

### 4.1 ITALIAN THEATRE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In the 2006 *History of the Italian Theatre* edited by Joseph Farrell and Paolo Puppa, Maurice Slawinski addresses the whole history of seventeenth century Italian theatre in merely fifteen pages. The paucity of information provided by the author reflects a larger academic assumption that nothing worth mentioning happened during this period besides the theatrical experience of *commedia dell'arte*, the scenic innovations of Italian designers working at home and abroad, and of course opera. While there is more to the theatre of the time that can possibly be summarized in a few pages, it is undeniably true that the Italian dramatic literature of the Baroque lacks the experimentation, creativity, and potential that characterized the French, Spanish, and English stages. Italian designers such as Nicoló Sabbatini, Jacopo Torelli, and the Bibbiena family reached the highest artistic standards in their crafts, but playwrights of this period never achieved the success or the dramaturgical quality of Corneille, Racine, Calderon, Lope, or Shakespeare. Italian playwrights' individual accomplishments failed to create an artistic movement and to develop into a long lasting theatre capable of expressing a collective artistic program or a set of national literary aspirations.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> “L’attività teatrale e l’impegno letterario e teatrale italiano oscillano invece, nei loro punti estremi e divergenti, fra un teatro ridotto a pura tecnica dello spettacolo e un teatro come tradizione letteraria, imitazione e ricordo classicistico ... Splendido di fama europea, presente ovunque, efficace di suggestioni e generoso di doni a tutta Europa, il teatro italiano sembra tuttavia incapace di esprimersi e di concretarsi in opere del valore di quelle del



Slawinski relates the discrepancy between the Italians' achievements in theatre architecture, sceno-techniques and stage machines, and the unsatisfactory plays produced on those very same stages to the geo-political fragmentation and the consequent limited nature of Italian absolutism, as well as the structure and aspirations of academic theatre, and the idiosyncratic attitude of the Church towards theatre. He concludes his assessment by saying that "the picture that emerges is contradictory and in many respects disappointing."<sup>269</sup> The author also underlines that Italian theatre is more text oriented than French, Spanish, and English theatre because it is derived directly from the tradition of Renaissance theatre, therefore it was written and staged by and for the academics as an intellectual and recreational activity, void of any commercial objective.<sup>270</sup>

The lack of a paying audience explains why the academicians and literati could write and produce their very self-referential dramatic exercises, and indulge their program of literary renovation and the creation of a modern tragedy inspired by the legacy of the Renaissance and its bent for classical drama. The focus on the text also explains the vast number of plays published in Italy during the 1600s. Plays were more than texts to perform, they were instruments to advance a highly intellectual debate over the structure of dramatic literature and its role under the larger umbrella of Italian literature. The power of suggestion of the text as a medium for durable literary recognition was so resilient in the culture of the 1600s that even the *commedia dell'arte*,

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teatro straniero." ("Both the Italian theatrical activity and its literary and theatrical output move between two extreme and divergent points, a theatre reduced to sheer technique and spectacle, and a theatre understood as literary tradition, imitative and reminiscent of the classicism ... Splendid with its European fame, omnipresent, effective with its suggestions, and generously lavishing its presents all over Europe, Italian theatre appears incapable to express itself and produce valuable works such as those of foreign theatre." Claudio Varese, "Teatro, prosa, poesia." Emilio Cecchi and Natalino Sapegno, (ed.), *Il Seicento. Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. 5 (Milan: Garzanti Editore, 1988), 551.

<sup>269</sup> Maurice Slawinski, "The Seventeenth-Century Stage." Joseph Farrell and Paolo Puppa, *History of the Italian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 128.

<sup>270</sup>"As the linear descendant of the humanist-inspired drama of the sixteenth century, it might be termed 'literary' theatre, but is perhaps better described by 'academic', since its natural location was the academy, that peculiarly literary Italian and social club which brought together the lay and ecclesiastical magnates of the locality, the lesser nobility and their client intellectuals (lawyers, doctors, teachers, priests)." Ibid., 129.

the least text-oriented of all theatrical traditions, could not escape its influence. Flaminio Scala published in 1611 *Il teatro delle favole rappresentative*, a collection of *scenarios*, seeking in the book-form the same public recognition academic playwrights aspired for in their works. Even *commedia dell'arte* performers such as Pier Maria Cecchini, Nicolò Barbieri, Silvio Fiorillo, and Giambattista Andreini could not resist the fascination of the written text, and “tentavano per loro conto una definizione letteraria del testo” (“tried on their own a literary definition of the text”).<sup>271</sup> Because of the coming together of both cultural and geo-political factors, the printing era in Italy established the play text as the permanent nemesis of performance and promoted the underdevelopment of Italian theatre.

Another factor that contributed to the academic fixation on the text and thwarted the development of performance was the enormous influence of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Originating in the classicist legacy of the sixteenth century, neo-Aristotelianism played a pivotal role in shaping seventeenth century dramatic literature in Italy. During this period, the *Poetics* had slowly but inexorably begun to replace Horace's *Ars Poetica* as a set of rules for composing theatre, even genres such as comedy, on which Aristotle left only fragments. Renaissance writers' major misunderstanding of the *Poetics* was to believe that Aristotle was concerned with the audience while in reality his interest lay in the structural making of tragedy. These writers brought morality into the *Poetics* by replacing Aristotle's aesthetical principles with rhetorical ones. Marvin Carlson describes this moralizing intent in his comment on Francesco Robortello's *Librum Aristotelis de arte poetica explicationis*, one of the most influential commentaries on Aristotle's text:

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<sup>271</sup> Mario Apollonio, *Storia del teatro italiano. Dall'età barocca al Novecento*. Milano: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 2003), 258

By emphasizing the pleasurable effect of mimesis, Robortello is able to bring Aristotle into line with the Horatian goal of delight, and the Italian critic is quick to add that profit is also involved. The method by which the latter is achieved is the traditional one: the imitation and praise of virtuous men incites men to virtue; the representation and condemnation of vice serve as deterrents. Rhetorical ends are thus substituted for Aristotle's aesthetic ones; the audience is primarily to gain not pleasure from the unity and formal qualities of the work but moral instruction from the various didactic elements.<sup>272</sup>

They also misunderstood many of the *Poetics*' key concepts, thus perpetuating a faulty understanding of the philosopher's ideas. Italian theatre of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries absorbed these flawed interpretations, which were publicized through numerous treatises and commentaries, and, as a consequence, Aristotle and his commentators shaped and conditioned playwriting for a long time.<sup>273</sup> Another factor that greatly influenced the tragic genre in the early 1600s was Lodovico Castelvetro's *La Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata e sposta*, one of the most popular treatises on the interpretation and manipulation of Aristotle's aesthetical principles. The author freely interprets the *Poetics* and is not afraid to criticize his source whenever he does not understand the aesthetical foundation of Aristotle's work, or when his own ideas clashed against those of the Greek.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Marvin Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 38.

<sup>273</sup> The commentaries, translations, and interpretations of Aristotle's *Poetics* are numerous and of unequal literary quality. Some of the major intellectuals who wrote about the topic are Giorgio Valla (1498), Marco Girolamo Vida (1527), Giovan Giorgio Trissino (1529), Bernardino Daniello (1536), Alessandro de' Pazzi (1536), Girolamo Fracastoro (1540), Lelio Gregorio Giraldis (1545), Vincenzo Maggi (1546), Francesco Robortello (1548), Pietro Vettori (1548), Bernardo Segni (1549), Vincenzo Maggi (1550), Giacomo Mantino (1550), Antonio Maria de' Conti (1550), Girolamo Muzio (1551), Giovan Battista Giraldis Cinzio (1554), Alessandro Lionardi (1554), Giovambattista Pigna (1554), Antonio Sebastiano Minturno (1559 and 1564), Scipione Ammirato (1560), Bernardo Tasso (1562), Bartolomeo Maranta (1563), Alessandro Piccolomini (1572), and Torquato Tasso (1587). For a detailed account of the debates surrounding the tragic genre, check Paola Mastrocola, *L'idea del tragico: Teorie della tragedia nel Cinquecento* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino Editore, 1998).

<sup>274</sup> While discussing the issue of pleasure brought about from the change of fortune of the tragic hero, Castelvetro states that "...once we have duly examined them we shall see how little Aristotle understands the nature of tragic pleasure." Andrew Bongiorno, ed., *Castelvetro on the Art of Poetry. An Abridged Translation of Lodovico Castelvetro's Poetica d'Aristotele Vulgarizzata et Sposta* (Binghamton: Library of Congress, 1894), 164.

The intellectual lucubration on the correct application of Aristotle's rules thwarted playwriting by turning it into a layered but ultimately stagnant workshop. While the dramatists' reflections on the forms and functions of the tragic text spurred animated academic debates, they also hindered the writing of dramatically valid plays.

Besides the admiration for the structural and interpretive frames provided by the *Poetics*, the Italian literati also felt the urge to embrace the challenges of new forms and critically experiment with the poetic and theatrical genres of classical and Renaissance times. The dialectic between past and present, old and new, local and global, is a constant principle in the seventeenth century and clearly reflects the exhilarating experiences of colonization, mercantile expansion, and scientific discoveries.<sup>275</sup> Both academic and religious theatre embraced the tension between tradition and innovation.

Italian Jesuit theatre shared the theoretical and literary concerns of academic theatre, as well as its fascination with Aristotle, therefore privileging the "teatro letterario" ('literary theatre') over the "teatro teatrale" ('theatrical theatre').<sup>276</sup> Even though the finality of Jesuit performance was still didactic and educational, and it still adopted spectacle as a strategy to deliver to the audience a deeper appreciation of the story, the Italian Jesuit dramatists looked at the text as the major intellectual achievement of playwriting.

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<sup>275</sup> "I valori della memoria, della continuità e della tradizione si incrinano: l'antico cessa di essere un valore di per sé, mentre il moderno acquista, in quanto tale, un significato positivo. Nondimeno non si giunge quasi mai a quello che sarà il particolare e diffuso rifiuto illuministico: il confronto col passato è complesso e in qualche modo inquieto; la novità può consistere nella novità del rapporto con gli antichi." ("The values associated with memory, continuity and tradition crack. The 'old' stops being a value in and out of itself, while the 'modern' gains a positive connotation solely for being such. Nevertheless, there is never the break with the past that characterizes the Enlightenment. The confrontation with the past is complex and somewhat uneasy; the novelty may well consist in the novelty of the relationship with the old values.") Claudio Varese, *Scena, linguaggio e ideologia dal Seicento al Settecento. Dal romanzo libertino al Metastasio* (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1985), 8-9.

<sup>276</sup> Mario Apollonio, 269.

E a Seicento inoltrato, l'interesse allo sfruttamento a fine educativo della spettacolarità, sia nelle forme liturgiche della predicazione o delle Quaranta Ore che nel teatro dei Collegi, portando al progressivo abbandono del latino e all'adozione e sperimentazione di forme drammatiche profane come la pastorale, introdusse nel Collegio dei Gesuiti anche il dramma musicale, la commedia dei caratteri e perfino il balletto allegorico, sempre tuttavia con il freno della forma letteraria e del contenuto morale: un teatro che riassume in sé quelle responsabilità intellettuali e morali che nel teatro teatrale erano ampiamente disattese.<sup>277</sup>

Slawinski notices that the priest working within the college was essentially similar to the lay academic intellectual and that “sacred dramas performed in churches or religious colleges also essentially belonged to this category (the clerics involved often formally constituted themselves into academies for the purpose.)”<sup>278</sup> Dramatists, both academic and religious, believed the words were the vehicles carrying the meaning of the play and conveying a successful performance. While the Italian Jesuits still used allegorical figures, special effects, and theatre machines as a part of their theatre, they used them more parsimoniously, and sometimes almost apologetically, compared to their colleagues in the rest of Europe. The Society of Jesus operating in Italy in the seventeenth century merged its well-known religious and political agendas with its aspiration for literary renewal. Theatre is the artistic realm where this is most evident as the attempt of reform of Giuseppe Simon (1595-1671), Alessandro Donati (1584-1640), Leone Santi (1585-1652), Giambattista Giattini (1601-1672) and especially Bernardino Stefonio (1560-1620) exemplify.

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<sup>277</sup> “During the seventeenth century, the interest in education and spectacle, in liturgy, predication, and Quaranta Ore ceremonies led to the progressive abandonment of Latin and to the adoption and experimentation with secular dramatic forms such as pastoral. Musical drama, comedy of characters, and even allegorical ballet were introduced in the Jesuit college, but always under the controlling frame of the literary form and moral content. It was a theatre that espoused the intellectual and moral responsibilities that were neglected in the ‘performative theatre’ of the time.” Clelia Falletti Cruciani, *Il teatro in Italia. Il Cinquecento e Seicento* (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 1999), 320.

<sup>278</sup> Maurice Slawinski, 129.

Una riforma importante fu tentata dal p. Bernardino Stefonio (1560-1620) che col *Crispus* (1597), tragedia in trimetri con cori modellata sulla *Fedra* di Seneca, volle dare al dramma gesuitico classicità e regolarità, mediante il rispetto delle unità, la riduzione dei personaggi, la soppressione di allegorie, personificazioni, spettacolari rappresentazioni di battaglie, nonché della musica nel corso degli atti. A partire da Stefonio (che seguì una diversa via nella *Flavia*, 1600) si osserva nel teatro dei Gesuiti un'oscillazione continua tra la tendenza 'teatrale' e quella regolare (che confina il meraviglioso nell'intermezzi).<sup>279</sup>

The conservative literary trend of Italian Jesuit theatre can be understood as a reflection of the censorship guaranteed both by the proximity of the Vatican State and the Collegio Romano, Rome's major Jesuit institution and the most influential of all of the Society of Jesus's colleges. Because of its prestigious location in the heart of the Catholic Church, it also had a formidable intellectual and literary bent, and it upheld, more than any other college, the strictest academic rigor in education.<sup>280</sup> The Collegio Romano also strictly followed the rules and codifications of the *Ratio Studiorum* for college theatre representation. As a result, tragedies were staged only twice a year, female characters were drastically reduced or allowed on stage only when disguised as men, and the content of the play was always spiritually edifying. While it is both legitimate and accurate to claim that Italian Jesuit theatre has in general a more literary bent than its other European counterparts, it also true that there are quite a few examples of Jesuit dramatists who ignore the call for moderation and regulation. It seems that the further away they are from Rome, the more freedom they appear to display in their works.

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<sup>279</sup> "Bernardino Stefonio (1560-1620) attempted an important reform with his 1597 *Crispus*, a tragedy in trimeters and choruses, modelled on Seneca's *Fedra*. Stefonio wanted to give classical and regular structure to Jesuitical drama by the respect of the unities, the reduction of the number of characters, the suppression of allegories, personifications, spectacular representations of battle scenes, as well as the music iduring the acts. Starting with Stefonio, who will follow a different path in his 1600 *Flavia*, one can see a recurrent oscillation between the theatrical mode of representation and the regular one, which confined the marvelous effects to the intermezzi." Silvio D'Amico, ed., *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo*. Vol. V (Rome: Unedi, 1975), 1162.

<sup>280</sup> Mario Apollonio, 269.

The theatrical experiences of Emanuele Tesauro, author of both *Hermenegildus* and *Ermegildo*, and Sforza Pallavicino, author of *Ermenegildo martire*, must be understood within the cultural parameters of the Italian baroque theatre at large. Not only were the two Jesuits major interpreters of the dramaturgical ideas circulating in the academic circles of the country, they also contributed greatly to the debates over the categorical definition of modern tragedy. Although with different degrees of commitment and literary intention, Tesauro and Pallavicino felt the tension to compose a ‘new tragedy’ inspired by the taste of the time as well as by the precepts, sometimes contested, of Aristotle’s *Poetics*. The following pages will take into account the works of both dramatists and underline the points of departure between the Spanish versions of Hermenegildo’s martyrdom and the Italian ones. The analysis will also shed light on the different dramaturgical and theological agendas existing between the tragedy of Tesauro and that of Pallavicino.

#### **4.2 EMANUELE TESAURO’S *ERMEGILDO***

Emanuele Tesauro (1592-1675) was a courtier, a Jesuit priest, and an intellectual who held a number of academic and political positions throughout his long career. His renowned *Cannocchiale Aristotelico*, a treatise published in Turin in 1654 and dealing with the literary use of wit and metaphor, bridged the gap between classical and modern rhetoric and established aesthetical theories that were to dominate the literary debates in Italy until the nineteenth century. His stature as a European intellectual set him apart from most of his Italian colleagues. He resided in the duchy of Milan, which at the time belonged to the Spanish crown, and served

many years in the Piedmont state as tutor to the King's son Emanuele Filiberto of Savoia, to whom he also dedicated the *Ermegildo*.<sup>281</sup> The experience of living both in Milan and in Turin forged Tesauo's interest in European literary traditions and exposed him to the cultural debates of the time about literary codifications, the discussions over the acceptance or rejections of the classics, and the intellectual disputes over the literary appropriateness of narrative themes and topics.

Having studied in a Jesuit college, Tesauo was aware of the rich legacy of Jesuit drama, and had experienced the power of persuasion associated with the theatrical medium. He started writing for the stage even before becoming a member of the Society of Jesus, while he was still a student in a Jesuit college.<sup>282</sup> Between 1818 and 1621, Tesauo wrote *Il libero arbitrio*, a theatrical reflection on mankind's capacity to determine what is right or wrong, and its responsibility in shaping its earthly and eternal life.<sup>283</sup> In 1621, while residing in the Spanish duchy of Milan, Tesauo organized the lavish ceremonies for the funeral of King Philip III, the first public ceremony for a Spanish monarch to happen in Milan.<sup>284</sup> That same year, Tesauo composed the drama *Hermenegildus* in Latin, the first of the two plays he wrote about the martyrdom of the Visigoth prince. *Hermenegildus* was staged on August 26, 1621, at the college of Brera where Tesauo worked as professor of rhetoric. Although the tragedy was ready in February, it took Tesauo some time to convince his superiors to organize a public

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<sup>281</sup> Tesauo explains his choice to name his hero Ermegildo instead of Ermenegildo, which would be the Italian equivalent of the Spanish Hermenegildo, by noting that phonetically the Spaniards would pronounce the name that way.

<sup>282</sup> Pierantonio Frare, *Retorica e verità: le tragedie di Emanuele Tesauo* (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1998), 8.

<sup>283</sup> Emanuele Tesauo, *Il libero arbitrio*. Maria Luisa Doglio, ed. *Emanuele Tesauo: Scritti* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2004).

<sup>284</sup> For a detailed account of the work Tesauo did for Philip III's funeral celebrations, check Giovanna Zanlonghi, "Lo sguardo del prudente: Emanuele Tesauo e la morte di Filippo III (1621)," *Teatri di formazione: Actio, parola e immagine nella scena gesuitica del Sei-Settecento a Milano* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2002).



performance.<sup>285</sup> The work consisted of five acts of six scenes each, separated by four choruses. Unlike the acts of the *entretenimiento* in *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, each chorus functioned as a lyrical commentary to the act and was “tematicamente legato alla *fabula* a svolgere una funzione comparabile a quella dell’intermezzo.”<sup>286</sup> The play must have gained some notoriety because in 1624 the Jesuits of the college of Ponte, in the Piedmont Valtellina area, translated it into vernacular Italian for one of their school theatrical productions.<sup>287</sup> This happened thirty-seven years before Tesauro decided to write his own Italian version of the Hermenegildo story: *Ermegildo*, written in 1659 and published in 1661.

What influenced the Italian Jesuit to write two tragedies about medieval Spain is still an object of discussion among scholars of Tesauro. Although the author affirms in the prologue to *Ermegildo* that his first Hermenegildo tragedy in Latin was “soggetto allora nuovo” (a new topic then), the modern scholar has to assume that Tesauro had heard about Pedro de Acevedo’s *Hermenegildus*, the successful 1590 production of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* in Seville, and Nicolas Caussin’s *Hermenegildus*, the *actio oratoria* published by the French Jesuit in 1620. It is also probable that Tesauro had heard about Gautier de Costes de La Calprenè’s *Hermenegilde*, a tragedy that raised an animated debate for being written in prose. He might have also read the later edition of La Calprenè’s tragedy which Pousset de Montauban had executed in verse.<sup>288</sup> That Tesauro knew these dramatic works is even more probable considering the geographical, cultural, and political proximity of Piedmont to France which the ruling presence of Cristina of France made all so evident. Moreover, Tesauro’s inexhaustible

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<sup>285</sup> Carpani, *Hermenegildus/Ermegildo*, 188-189.

<sup>286</sup> “[The chorus is] thematically linked to the *fabula* and functions similarly to the intermezzo.” Gianfranco Damiano, “Drammaturgia e spettacolo al collegio milanese di Brera. Dalle origini all’*Hermenegildus* di Emanuele Tesauro.” M. Chiabò and F. Doglio, ed., *I Gesuiti e i Primordi del Teatro Barocco in Europa*, 343.

<sup>287</sup> Pierantonio Frare, 47.

<sup>288</sup> Check H. Carrington Lancaster, “La Claprenède Dramatist. II,” *Modern Philology*, Vol. 18, No. 7 (Nov., 1920), 350-351. (345-360)

interest in different national literatures, and his frequent stays in Spanish protectorates in Italy such as Naples and Milan were likely to have brought him into contact with one or more stage representations of the Hermenegildo story. Tesauro would also have known the theological role that the Visigoth martyr had assumed during the Counter Reformation, and would have had at least a passing knowledge of a few of the many tragedies, oratorios, and various literary compositions inspired by the saint.

The writer must have found the temptation to write his own version of the martyr's story and compete with its previous renditions irresistible. The subject provided him with the unique chance to establish his name as a more sophisticated playwright than his French and Spanish predecessors, as well as to create a model tragedy that would reflect his codifications and rules for modern tragedy, an issue I will address later on in this chapter.<sup>289</sup>

Nevertheless, what is particularly interesting is not whether Emanuele Tesauro lied about his knowledge of other Hermenegildo's plays in order to magnify the relevance and innovation of his work, but the fact that he wrote two dramatic works about this Spanish saint forty years apart from one another. The story of Hermenegildo marks both Tesauro's early association with the Society of Jesus, as well as his later detachment from the religious order. In spite of the fact that the writer left the Jesuit order in the 1630s to become a simple priest, he composed in his maturity a version in Italian of his 1621 *Hermenegildus*, titled *Ermegildo*, which will be the focus of my research in this chapter.

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<sup>289</sup> Tesauro felt strongly the urge to defend Italian literary achievements against its detractors, and this led him often to vitriolic diatribe against intellectuals who attacked his country. An example of Tesauro's bent for litigiousness is his short libel *L'Italia vindicata* which was directed against Pierre Le Moyne, a French Jesuit who had criticized Italy and Tesauro's own *Cannocchiale aristotelico* in his 1666 *De l'Art des Devices*. Tesauro expresses his irritation at the French priest also in a letter dated September 9, 1666, addressed to Father Giovan Michele Graneri. See Emanuele Tesauro, *L'Italia vindicata*. Maria Luisa Doglio, 97-103. Tesauro's letter can also be found in Doglio's anthology (147-150).

#### 4.2.1 Plot description

Act I opens with the Visigothic state in turmoil. Ermegildo is back after four years of exile he spent at the court of the Emperor Tiberius to claim his place within the Visigothic kingdom. However, he is not concerned with ruling over his fellow citizens, but simply with the opportunity to reside unarmed in the motherland he missed so much. In spite of the Byzantine army that accompanies him, Ermegildo is not portrayed as a warrior but as a peaceful, meek individual who is tired of exile and, as the messenger explains to king Leovigildo, desires to settle in an “oscuro angoletto, ove raccolto / Fra i più vili tuoi servi, almen vagheggi / Il suo cielo e ‘l tuo volto.”<sup>290</sup> Leovigildo appears old, disillusioned and sincerely concerned about his son’s destiny. He blames the present situation on his wife Gosvinta, who pushed him to militarily engage Ermegildo, as well as on Ermegildo’s wife Ingunda for having converted his son to Catholicism. Leovigildo would like nothing better than to welcome Ermegildo back to Seville but he admits he cannot do so because his compatriots expect him as the king to be the first one to observe the law sanctioning Arianism as the only religion. Nevertheless, there are people at court who are critical of the king’s strict enforcement of the civic and religious laws, and would rather welcome Ermegildo back in Spain. The Praetor mildly reproaches the king by suggesting that military power should be used to fight the Moors and the Turks, not Ermegildo, whom Leovigildo should make co-regent. This is also the opinion of the Byzantine characters who hope for peace. The king asks for Cherinto’s opinion, the scheming Arianistic priest, and he suggests that the answer to Leovigildo’s prayers resides in the interpretation of the law, which he reads to

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<sup>290</sup> “An obscure corner, where in the company of your most humble servants, he may enjoy his land and your face.” Emanuele Tesauro, *Ermegildo*, 28.

the king: “Se alcun sedizioso in questi Regni, Rubello e contumace al culto Ariano / Volge il cor e la fede al Vaticano; / La pietà col suo sangue agli altri insegna.”<sup>291</sup> Cherinto points out that the law addresses solely the crime of spreading Catholicism, not the individual right to practice it in private. According to Cherinto’s interpretation, Ermegildo could come home and practice his faith as long as he keeps a low profile on it. The “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” reading of the law makes Leovigildo ecstatic because it gets him out of choosing between his family and the state. The act ends with the king summoning the Council to communicate the happy news of Ermegildo’s return.

In act II, Recaredo complains that his father prefers Ermegildo to him, and that the return of his brother erases any possibility for him to be king. In an act of despair he is about to commit suicide but his stepmother Gosvinta stops him just when he is about to stab himself. She is furious at the news that Ermegildo is coming back as king, but she renews the promise to Recaredo that he will be king one day. She instructs him to fake joy for his brother and wait for her further directions. Gosvinta meets with the Consul who reads the text of the decree Ermegildo would have to sign upon entering the city:

Poiché per tua pietà mi si concede  
Il Catolico nome, e 'l Romano Rito:  
E che co' miei dimastici in privato  
Al Romano Pastor serbi la Fede:  
Su la tua Spada imperiosa i' giuro:  
Spada di eccelso Re fulmine in Terra,  
Come il fulmine è in Ciel Spada di Dio:  
Di non mai violar la Fé ch'io deggio  
Ligio al Re, Figlio al Padre, ed Uomo a Dio.  
E s'avverrà, ch'altri per me si parta  
Dalla Legge, che al Regno Ario Prescrisse;  
Io vo' soffrir, che della colpa mia

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<sup>291</sup> “If a seditious man infringes arrogantly the cult of Arius, he will teach the value of piety to the others by paying with his own blood.” *Ibid.*, 34.

Fuoco, e ferro crudel vindice sia.<sup>292</sup>

The Consul alludes to the fact that Leovigildo might have chosen the peace with his son for fear that Tiberius's army would dethrone him, but the reality is that Ermegildo goes to his father as a subjugated captive who expects nothing more than a place to stay. The act ends with Ermegildo's triumphant return to Seville and his first moving encounter with his father. The presence of Ermegildo's son enhances the emotional power of the scene. The child, who was an infant when he left his country to follow his family in exile, has no memory of the place where he was born, or of his paternal family, so he prompts Ermegildo to describe things and people. By asking his father questions about his new surroundings, he provides the hero with the chance to delve into his memories and feelings.

In act III, Panfago, an old servant to Cherinto, returns to Seville and explains to his former master how he managed to survive many adversities in Greece thanks to his ability to dissimulate, lie, and trick. The conversation between the two characters gives Tesauo the chance to illustrate the political and religious situation of the state, and portray the court as a place of schemes and manipulations where the worth of rhetoric is invaluable. When he says "La Corte è un mare; pescatori i ghiotti; / Canna la Fede; la speranza il filo; / Amo l'amor; le parolette, il verme," Cherinto is describing rhetoric as the guarantee for longevity at court.<sup>293</sup> The emphasis on the effective use of the words as the bait used by the gluttons to achieve what they desire in the court, comments on the preeminent importance of communication as well as its manipulations at the hands of unscrupulous individuals. The dangers of court life are numerous,

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<sup>292</sup> "As for your piety I have received the right to my Catholic name and Roman rite, as well as to keep my faith to the Roman Pastor among my people in private, I swear on your imperious sword (the sword of a excellent king is a lighting on earth just like that of God is in heaven) not to break the word I gave you as a subject to his king, a son to my father, and man to God. If anybody because of my action will abandon the laws that Arius gave us, I am to suffer the fire and cruel sword as punishment for my faults." *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>293</sup> "The court is the sea; the fishermen are gluttons; the fishing rod is Faith; the threat is hope; the hook is love; the bait are words."

as the arrival of the Consul proves. He cautions Cherinto to be careful because the queen is angry with him for having paved the way for Ermegildo's return. Both his fear of royal revenge and his greed for a long-sought promotion motivate Cherinto to devise a plan to get rid of Ermegildo. Knowing that the only way to expel him is by proving that he proselytized his faith, Cherinto convinces Recaredo to fake being a Catholic and try to compromise his brother's promise to follow his religion only in private. Blinded by jealousy toward his brother and by his desire to be king, Recaredo promptly accepts the task. He confesses to his brother to be Catholic, expresses to him his unwillingness to celebrate Easter according to the Arianistic rites, and asks him for advice. Ermegildo is very cautious at first but then starts to talk freely knowing that by talking to his Catholic brother he is not spreading his faith but simply conversing with a fellow believer. He reaffirms the importance of keeping the true faith, even when that requires one's own death as a martyr. Seeing that his brother is not ready to accept martyrdom as an option, Ermegildo suggests that Recaredo seek refuge either in Rome or at the court of his father-in-law Sigisbert I in France, where he can build up a stronger faith: "Quivi ricoverai finché quel Nume / Che ti ha fatto Fedel, ti faccia forte. / E ti paia soave anco la morte."<sup>294</sup> Before leaving, Recaredo asks for a holy relic or a religious item that might strengthen his faith and comfort him during his journey. Ermegildo gives him a ring with the effigy of Pope Pelagius as a token of his affection, thus unknowingly igniting the process leading to his own demise. The act ends with Panfago recounting the insurrection he supposedly witnessed in the Byzantine camp that led to the killing of many soldiers. Alarmed by the news, the Praetor departs immediately, leaving Ermegildo unprotected in Seville. Not surprisingly, the insurrection is a lie to get the imperial forces out of Seville and make Ermegildo's accusation and indictment for treason easier to achieve.

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<sup>294</sup> "There you will recover until the same God who made you a believer will also make you stronger. So that even the thought of death will look appealing to you." Ibid., 101.

Act IV opens with Recaredo assailed by doubts over the correct course of action to take. After much thought, he commands Casimiro, a hunter who is also a friend of Ermegildo, to deliver the ring to Cherinto. The man is unaware of the priest's plan against Ermegildo but senses that there might be something dangerous in store for his friend. After delivering the ring, he spies on Cherinto and Panfago and learns about their plot to accuse Ermegildo of infringing the conditions of his return to court. In scene 4, the ambassador of the Longobards approaches Ermegildo with the offer to unite their forces to conquer Rome and divide it among themselves. Ermegildo refuses the proposition as unworthy of a noble soul and restates the temporal and spiritual value of the Church, as well as the role of the Vatican. In the following two scenes, Casimiro advises Ermegildo to be cautious because there is a conspiracy against his person at court. Casimiro is vague in providing details because on one hand he feels it would be disloyal to break the promise he made to Recaredo not to talk about the ring, and on the other hand he fears for his own life. Ermegildo understands the gravity of the situation even without knowing the details of the scheme and immediately sends his son away from the city. After the Consul presents the accusation in front of the Council, Panfago is heard as a witness, and a death sentence is sanctioned against Ermegildo. Leovigildo reverses the sentence in a desperate attempt to save his son's life, but, consequently, an insurrection led by the Queen breaks loose in the city. Just when every chance to restore the peace and spare the life of Ermegildo seems lost, Cherinto says that there is a way to fulfill Leovigildo's desire to ensure both the respect of the law and the satisfaction of paternal love, as Leovigildo puts "La Legge insieme, e l'Amor mio" ("The law together with my love").<sup>295</sup> The act ends on a gloomy but suspenseful note; with the sounds of war approaching the palace, but also with the remote hope that the priest might be telling the truth.

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid, 153.

In act V, Cherinto explains the solution he alluded to at the end of the previous act. He states that infringing the law is not a sufficient condition to execute Ermegildo, because the law maintains that the accused should also be “contumace,” which implies the crime of being guilty by default. The law, reports Cherinto, will be clement towards the sinner who repents because “il peccare è debilezza umana” (“sinning is a human frailty”), and it will prosecute only those who repeatedly break it, because “la contumacia è vizio dei Demoni” (“recidivism is the vice of demons.”)<sup>296</sup> The priest proposes that if Ermegildo accepts the holy wafer from his hand during the Arian Easter, his crime should be pardoned. That action would prove to everybody that he is not a contumacious sinner, and that he repents for his crime. Leovigildo meets his son and tries in different manners to convince him to abjure, but nothing can move Ermegildo to do so. When the sentence is about to be carried out, Recaredo arrives at the tower where Ermegildo is about to die and stops the execution, promising that the judgment will be overturned when the Council hears his self-accusation and the testimony of Casimiro. In scene 7, guilt-ridden Panfago and Cherinto, upon hearing that Recaredo and Casimiro are going to speak in front of the Council, commit suicide by jumping in the river. Scene 8 summarizes the main actions of the plot and unveils the subtle plan Cherinto has devised. The queen also admits her involvement, but denying any responsibility, the Byzantine ambassador returns with the news that Panfago lied about the insurrection. Casimiro finally tells the whole story, and Recaredo confesses how he unjustly framed Ermegildo. Just as everything appears to be finally resolved, the Praetor arrives with the sad news that the Tribune of the People and the Consul have carried out the beheading of Ermegildo, possibly because they witnessed the suicide of Cherinto and Panfago from the tower and feared a coup had been organized by Ermegildo’s supporters. In the last scene of the

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 160.



play, Ermegildo appears to the court as a spiritual being to remind everybody that his blood paved the way to Catholicism as the only Spanish religion.

#### **4.2.2 Rhetoric, politics, and religion in *Ermegildo***

Tesauro's Latin *Hermenegildus* and his Italian *Ermegildo* are very different from one another. While the story remains the same, the author changed names, deleted scenes, and demonstrates an improved understanding of the dramatic medium.<sup>297</sup> In *Ermegildo*, Tesauro decided to ignore the rule of the *Ratio Studiorum* that forbade the presence of female characters on stage and includes the character of the queen Gosvinta, who is missing in the 1621 tragedy. In order to represent the crowd that would have been attending Leovigildo's court, as well as to add dramatic gravitas to the performance, Tesauro also multiplies the number of secondary characters, adding the Tribune of the People, the Messenger of Leovigildo, the Messenger of the Emperor, the Ambassador of the King of the Longobards, various Seville senators, orators of Ermegildo, and the soul of the martyr that appears in the last scene of act V. However, the major difference between the two plays is not about the plot, nor about the number of dramatic personae. It has to do with the structural and rhetorical concerns that the author had developed and struggled with over the past forty years, and that had led him to the writing of the

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<sup>297</sup> Stefano Verdino, *Le tragedie italiane del Tesauro* in AA.VV., *Da Carlo Emanuele I a Vittorio Amedeo II. Atti del convegno nazionale di studi* (Alessandria, 1997), 125; Gianfranco Damiano, *Il teatro gesuitico a Milano nei secoli XVI e seventeenth: il collegio di Brera e la tragedia di Emanuele Tesauro*, doctoral dissertation (Milan: Università Cattolica, 1993), 69, cited in Pierantonio Frare, 48.

*Cannocchiale aristotelico*.<sup>298</sup> In this work, Tesauro had declared that rhetoric, which he called “Cavillazione urbana,” reveals the truth through the disguise of falsity:

Rhetoric is concerned with popular persuasion, Dialectic with scholastic reasoning. Thus the urbane or rhetorical cavillation strives to delight the mind of the listeners with pleasantries, without the encumbrance of the truth ... The rhetorician desirous to move or persuade his listeners in the most pleasing manner possible, seasons, Tesauro tells us, the propositions of his enthymemes with pretty phrases, changes their order, leaves out those liable to be boring, and entangles those propositions which, if clearly developed, would reveal the fallacy ... Stated briefly, the urbane cavillation imitates the false in order to teach the true ...<sup>299</sup>

Although Tesauro never talked about theatre in *Cannocchiale aristotelico*, his conceptualization of rhetorical discourse underlines a striking epistemological propinquity between rhetoric and theatre. Not only do they share foundational principles such as their apparently paradoxical claims to imitate the false and instruct in the true. They also partake of the same propensity for verbal sophistication, richness of imagery, highly semiotic codes, and the necessity of an audience. As a means to persuade and fascinate the audience, *Ermegildo* delivers the effects of *meraviglia* in more than one way. It dazzles the audience with the special effects used in the resurrection and ascent of Ermegildo to heaven, it creates a complex and highly

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<sup>298</sup> “...nell’*Ermegildo* lo sbilanciamento degli assi concettuale e retorico-strutturale verso la linea che possiamo definire di ‘mistione meravigliosa’ risponde ad un coerente sviluppo dell’esperienza teorica e letteraria tesauriana, concretizzatasi in quella grande *summa* dell’Oratoria e Poetica Elocutione” *sub specie* dell’ “Argutezza” costituita dal *Cannocchiale aristotelico*.” (“... in *Ermegildo* the leaning of both the conceptual axis and the structural and rhetorical axis toward the notion of the ‘marvelous mix’ corresponds to the coherent development of Tesauro’s theoretic and literary experience, which had led to the great accomplishment of ‘Oratory and Poetic Elocution’ and ‘Wit’ represented by the *Cannocchiale aristotelico*.” Mauro Sarnelli, *Emanuele Tesauro dall’Hermegildus (1621) all’Ermegildo (1661)*. Paola Andrioli, Giuseppe Antonio Camerino, Gino Rizzo, and Paolo Viti, ed., *Teatro, scena, rappresentazione dal Quattrocento al Settecento. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Lecce, 15-17 maggio 1997)* (Galatina: Congedo Editore, 2000), 277.

<sup>299</sup> Robert E. Proctor, “Emanuele Tesauro: A Theory of the Conceit,” *MLN*, Vol. 88, No. 1, The Italian Issue (Jan., 1973) pp. 68-94. 85-86

metaphorical style that invites the public to constantly concentrate on and decipher what they hear, and finally, it employs a procedural plot which is difficult to predict.

*Ermegildo*'s rhetorical aim is not the only aspect that separates it from *Hermenegildus*. The emphasis on politics is also a predominant theme in the 1661 Italian tragedy. As Carpani poignantly notices, the dramaturgical world of *Ermegildo* displays a more mature understanding of the nature of political power as it is embodied by the character of Leovigildo and displays "una complessità di vedute estranea alla schematica strutturazione di *Hermenegildus*, costruito secondo in criteri della esemplarità apologetica."<sup>300</sup> The exemplarity of the characters and the schematic structure of *Hermenegildus* are of course landmark characteristics of the Jesuit theatre, whose main objective is the binomial of instructing and entertaining, and they appear in *Ermegildo* as well. However, the Italian play charges the political power with the accusation of being unjust. By focusing so much on issues of interpretations and by emphasizing the law as pure *logos*, *Ermegildo* preempts linguistic communication of any capability to carry objectivity. The issue of jurisprudent interpretation will be analyzed in the following pages in relationship with Tesauro's understanding of political power and legality.

Tesauro wrote his Italian *Ermegildo* forty years after its Latin antecedent. As scholar Stefano Verdino notes, by 1661 the author had a different maturity, as well as a more developed awareness of the political turmoil that had caused the Thirty Years War and the horrors it left behind after the war ended. He had also acquired a detailed and painful knowledge of the internal conflicts existing within the Savoy state where he had resided for a long time.<sup>301</sup> *Ermegildo* reflects profoundly on the devastating effects brought about by enmities and military conflicts

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<sup>300</sup> "It displays a complexity of perspectives that is alien to the schematic structure of *Hermenegildus*, constructed according to the criteria of apologetic exemplarity." R. Carpani, "Hermenegildus/Ermegildo la tragedia cristiana nell'opera di Emanuele Tesauro," *Comunicazioni Sociali*, XIX, No. 2, (Aprile-Giugno), 216-217.

<sup>301</sup> Stefano Verdino, 127.

among members of the same family because it analogizes the opposition of Ingunda and Ermegildo to Leovigildo, Gosvinta and Recaredo with the dynastic war between Cristina of France, the wife of Vittorio Amedeo I, and her brothers-in-law Maurizio and Tommaso di Carignano. In 1637, at the death of Vittorio Amedeo I, Cristina, who was the daughter of Henri IV and sister of Louis XIII, had continued to reign on behalf of her son Francesco Giacinto. When he also died in 1638, Cristina carried on ruling for her other son, Carlo Emanuele II. Her decision led to a war with her husband's brothers who seized Turin in 1639 and forced Cristina to escape to France. The struggle to control Piedmont territory continued the following year when Cristina returned to Turin escorted by French troops and established herself as sole ruler of the house of Savoy.<sup>302</sup> When Carlo Emanuele II came of age in 1648 he started to rule officially, even though the real power remained in the hands of Cristina until her death.

Although Tesauro had supported the faction that was opposed to Cristina, in *Ermegildo* he proposes a pacification by portraying the victorious queen under the best light possible. In the prologue to the play, he goes so far as to equate her with Ingunda by comparing their French nationality, their civilizing effects on the country that came to be theirs by marriage, and their very strong Catholic faith.

Peroché apunto una Principesa di Francia, di Profession CRISTIANA, e d'Animo simile alla Nostra Reina, fu quella, che ritraendo dall'Ariana Eresia alla vera Fede il Principe Ermegildo suo Sposo, fe' risonar nella Spagna il NOME CATOLICO fra quegli Re Goti, fierissimi persecutori della Chiesa.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> "Cristina's limited victory ensured the orderly succession of the dynasty. The French, already esconded at Pinerolo 40 miles to the southwest, remained in the city until 1645, and in the citadel until 1657, effectively hobbling the duchy. Nonetheless, Cristina and Carlo Emanuele II staged an impressive ceremonial reentry into Turin in 1645." Susan Claiber, book review of *Turin, 1564-1680: Urban Design, Military Culture, and the Creation of the Absolutist Capital*, by Martha D. Pollak, *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 52, No. 1. (Mar., 1993): 102.

<sup>303</sup> "As a matter of fact, a French princess of catholic faith and very similar to our queen for the purity of her soul was the one who stole away her husband from Arianistic heresy to restore him to the true faith, and made known the

The favorable portrayal of Cristina also fits the occasion of the representation of the play itself, which, according to the prologue, was written “per recitarsi da Nobili Personaggi nel Giorno Natalizio di Madama Reale; come Soggetto proprissimo e gloriosissimo a quel Regio Sangue.”<sup>304</sup> The prologue is both a dedication to the victorious party and a wish for long lasting pacification among the opposing factions. It reaffirms the legitimacy of Cristina’s government over the Savoy kingdom and aims at erasing the memory of past conflicts.

Nevertheless, the play is not merely a celebration of the royal family of Turin, nor simply a theatrical celebration for the birthday of Cristina. Its message deals with the very core of the political power, and contains lessons that Tesauro intended to impart to the ruling class of Turin. *Ermegildo* shares the general concern of Italian seventeenth century drama with the relationship between the individual and the state. Slawinski defines this preoccupation as both real and original to the dramatic production of the period

If there is a core of real feeling and originality (as opposed to mere novelty) in the century’s theatre it lies in the preoccupation, across the whole range of theatrical genres and production contexts, with the closely interrelated issues of reason of state, dissimulation, and role-playing, demonstrating with various degrees of self-consciousness how, far from exercising choice, individuals bend themselves to or are bent by their imposed roles. From these issues dramatists occasionally go on to touch on the illusory nature of any socially constructed reality and the consequent precariousness of self-representation, making theatre itself a metaphor for that precariousness.<sup>305</sup>

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catholic name in Spain among those Goth kings that were fierce persecutors of the Church.” Emanuele Tesauro, *Ermegildo*, Pierantonio Frare and Michele Gazich, ed. (Rome: Vecchiarelli Editore, 2002), 3.

<sup>304</sup> “To be performed by noble personages on the birthday of Our Highness the queen as a very proper and glorious subject for her royal blood.” *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>305</sup> Maurice Slawinski, 140-141.

One aspect of the play that strikes the reader as both recurrent and highly emphasized is the focus on the applicability of moral codes to the ruling class. Does the king have to submit to the same set of rules that regulates the lives of his subjects? Can the king overwrite a law that goes against his own interests? Can he lie for the good of the state? Should his sentiments guide his judgment? Just as he had done with *Hermenegildus*, Tesauro in *Ermegildo* explores the relationship between man and power through the character of King Leovigildo “e quindi lo colloca nel cuore medesimo delle istituzioni –la famiglia, la religione, lo stato-, che si condensano nella figura del sovrano.”<sup>306</sup>

One subject that repeatedly emerges in the tragedy is whether people in power should be entitled to lie. Leovigildo brings it up when he tries to convince Ermegildo to abjure his faith, and the issue resurfaces in connection with the reflection on the circumstantial situation of new states, and whether lying should be used to protect them for the envy of surrounding nations. *Ermegildo* portrays the world of the court as an environment where lying is not only justified, but also encouraged. While criticism of court life was common in the 1600s, Tesauro’s attack on the court is particularly vitriolic because it undermines the moral legitimacy of this institution to provide guidance and justice for the citizenship. In act II, the writer compares the court to a “cortile” which is the Italian word for courtyard, the place which is more culturally associated with people gathering to chat and gossip. He compares the courtiers to dogs “Ch’ogni tana, ogni fratta intentamente / Orecchiando, e fiutando; ogni virgulto, / Ogni frasca che triemi, alzan latrati.”<sup>307</sup> The animalistic portrayal of the courtiers highlights their predisposition for excessive gossip, and their constant striving for power and recognition. The ruler, who could and should

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<sup>306</sup> “...thus he places it in the very heart of the institutions (family, religion, the state) which coalesce in the character of the monarch.” Gianfranco Damiano, “Drammaturgia e spettacolo...,” 345

<sup>307</sup> “[They] go around every cave and every bush sniffing and eavesdropping, attentively hearing and smelling everything, and they bark at every branch that moves.” Tesauro, *Ermegildo*, 77

bring dignity and nobility to the court, does not act as a stabilizing force. In fact, Tesauro highlights the presence of the king as authoritative to the point of becoming an obstacle for the individual expression of ideas, thus making “Non voler ciò che’l Re vuole” (not to want what the king wants) a risky decision.

The author sees in the legal system the necessary corrective influence to both monarchical abuses and courtiers’ manipulation. He strongly asserts the centrality of legality and due process as foundational to the survival of civil society. In spite of the fact that Leovigildo tries to change and overwrite the legal system in the attempt to save his son, the play asserts the incontestable demands of the law, as well as its unarguable application on all subjects, regardless of their birth and status. When Leovigildo states that “E questo è il maggior male, che benché il ferro / Ei volesse deporre, il mio non posso,” he is addressing one of the conceptual *leitmotifs* of the play, the severe rigidity of the laws that forces even the king to oblige the rules of the nation.<sup>308</sup> When in act IV Leovigildo would like to place the authority of the monarch above the common law, his claim fails against the rigid legality of the Consul who reminds the king of “le patrie Leggi: / i Fasci del Consiglio; e della Plebe / il supremo Tribun,”<sup>309</sup> the institutions that guarantee equality and justice for all citizens.

CONSOLE	Ha prescritto la Legge ancor le pene
RE	Ma gli è ufficio de’ Regi il limitarle
CONSOLE	Che limitar, quando l’Editto è chiaro?
RE	Siedono i Re sopra i comuni Editti
CONSOLE	Siede la Religion sopra de’ Regi
RE	Il Consiglio mi vieta esser clemente?
CONSOLE	Clemenza intempestiva è feritade.
RE	Quest’ingiuria a me tocca.
CONSOLE	E prima al Nume.
RE	Se il Re può condannar, può condonare.

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<sup>308</sup> “This the worst evil, that even if he wanted to depose his weapons, I can’t do the same with mine.” Ibid., 19.

<sup>309</sup> “The nation’s laws, the fasces of the Council, and the supreme Tribune of the People.” Ibid., 18.

CONSOLE  
RE

Tocca a Dio condonar l'onte di Dio  
Tocca a Dio di punir l'onte di Dio<sup>310</sup>

This conversation reaffirms not only the subordination of the king to the law of the land, but also the necessity for the king to negotiate, and sometimes compromise, with the other legitimate powers of the state. Tesauro is reiterating here the fact that political stability comes only when the monarch creates the conditions for peaceful dialogue among the different components and forces of the state. This advice would have resonated with the members of Turin's royal family, which had recently engaged in a civil war for the throne.

However, Tesauro's lesson is more complex and contradictory than one might think at first. The author invites the public to ponder whether it is even possible for the law to ensure true justice. The issue of legality and correct application of the law clashes against the ruthless world of the play, where callous individuals administer the law and put into motion a series of events that will lead to the execution of an innocent man. In *Ermegildo*, the law conveys univocal signification and universal applicability only superficially. Cherinto proves its epistemological multiplicity twice by demonstrating how the laws need interpretation if one aspires to understand their subtle significances. The focus is as much on the law's objectivity as it is on its possible interpretations, therefore the play is inherently a hermeneutical reflection on the possibility of

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<sup>310</sup> CONSUL: The law prescribes the punishments.  
KING: But it is the right of the kings to limit them.  
CONSUL: Why limit them, when the rule is clear?  
KING: The king is above the common rules.  
CONSUL: Religion sits above the king.  
KING: Does the Council forbid me from being merciful?  
CONSUL: A rushed clemency is dangerous.  
KING: This is an injury that touches me deeply.  
CONSUL: It touches God even more.  
KING: If the king can condemn, he can also condone.  
CONSUL: It is up to God to pardon the offences against God.  
KING: It is up to God to punish the offences against God.  
Ibid., 147-148.



justice. The Consul clarifies this aspect when in act V he reacts to Cherinto's reading of the law and says "Il Testo è chiaro: / Ma fin qui non fu inteso il suo tenore."<sup>311</sup>

Unaccustomed to lying, Ermegildo gets lost in Cherinto's web of deceptions, unable to betray his brother and incapable of articulating 'his own' truth in front of the Council. The play marks the inconsequentiality of righteous human behavior by displaying the effectiveness of a communication ruled by a faulted and deceitful intents. In act IV, scene 12, Ermegildo finally has the chance to establish the truth and save himself by testifying that he did not convince Recaredo to convert because Recaredo was already a Catholic at the moment of their conversation. However, his words go unheard, buried under the lies spread by Cherinto and Panfago. Ermegildo tries to clarify to the Council how he did not break his promise to keep his faith private:

Or fingi tu esser vero, che Recaredo,  
Per gli consigli miei si sia rivolto  
Dall'Ariana alla Romana Fede:  
Giurai, se dritto il giuramento intendi;  
Di soffrir volentieri ogni martirio,  
Quando co' detti miei l'Alma fraterna  
Dall'Ariano error prosciolta avessi:  
E se questo è fallire, il Ciel ne accusa.<sup>312</sup>

Ermegildo explains that Recaredo was already a Catholic when he talked to him, therefore he did not break the law. While this revelation could free Ermegildo and put an end to Cherinto's schemes, the Council ignores it because Ermegildo fails to be clear out of fear of damaging his brother. The prince's rhetoric is weak, his message confusing, and his delivery too vague and

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<sup>311</sup> "The text is clear but up until now its meaning had not been understood." Ibid., 161.

<sup>312</sup> "You lie when you say that Recaredo abandoned Arianism to embrace Catholicism because of my advices. I swore, if you intend clearly my oath, to suffer willingly martyrdom in case I had convinced my brother to leave the Arianistic error. God is witness I did not do that." Tesauro, *Ermegildo*, 145.

sibyline to capture the attention of the judges. This Christian hero is not a suitable match for the oratorical prowess of Cherinto who silently maneuvers all the characters like pawns in a game of chess. Ermegildo makes the mistake of believing his innocence is enough to protect him, but fails to see that the establishment of the truth is a procedural operation, a mere construction based on the details and circumstantial proofs provided by the corrupt testimonies of Panfago, as well as the well-meaning deposition of Casimiro. Even though Ermegildo does not contravene the promise to keep his faith private, his actions throughout the play raise suspicions and leave space to multiple interpretations. Pierantonio Frare and Michele Gazich address the problematic construction of the 'human' truth as falsity as a "tragedia dell'interpretazione" ("a tragedy of interpretation"), because "L'*Ermegildo* mette dunque in scena il problema del legame tra essere e parola, tra l'ontologico ed il linguistico e il dramma, ad esso legato, del rapporto tra vero e falso."<sup>313</sup>

While it is customary in Jesuit tragedy to display the apparent success of the evil characters over the innocence of the hero in order to guarantee a cathartic finale with the resurrection of the saint and his assumption to heaven, *Ermegildo* problematizes this easy *denouement* by muddling the moral polarization of good and evil, inviting the audience to question the inevitability of the tragic events. Tesauro shies away from the Jesuit dichotomous opposition of good characters versus evil ones by finding justification for everybody's behavior. Gosvinta is concerned with the security of the state and when she faces the possibility that Ermegildo might abjure his faith she is quick to say "O me felice, / S'io vedessi una volta in questo Regno / Una Fede, un Amore, un Tempio, un Rito."<sup>314</sup> When she discovers that Ermegildo is dead she is sincerely shaken and claims that all she has done was justified by her

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<sup>313</sup> "*Ermegildo* stages the problematic relationship between the being and the word, between the ontological, the linguistic, and the dramatic present in the relationship between truth and falsity." Ibid, xlvi-xlvii.

<sup>314</sup> "Oh lucky me, if I could see for once in this kingdom one faith, one love, one temple and one rite." Ibid., 162.

love for Recaredo and as a way to prevent his suicide. As Frare has noticed, Gosvinta suggests in her last lines that she might be retiring into a convent to expiate her guilt: “E per placare il Cielo, in quattro mura / Finché occhi avrò, gli struggerò col pianto.”<sup>315</sup> The Tribune and the Consul are only concerned with the due process of legality, thus they cannot be accused of having homicidal thoughts against Ermegildo. Even Cherinto has some valid justification for being scheming. He claims to have hatched his plans only to avoid the anger of Gosvinta, and when he talks to Panfago he confesses that his victory would be even greater if Ermegildo lives, “Maggior palma / Mi fia, se quel garzon campa da morte,” (“A greater victory I would receive if that boy lives.”) He also appears to be aware of the gravity of the consequences brought about by his plotting when he says that his crime “ora ch’è discoperato, è troppo enorme” (“Now that is disclosed, it is too enormous.”), and his suicide demonstrates that his crime was unintentional. The position of Panfago as a semi-comedic character spares him from too harsh moral judgment. Essentially, he is doing a favor to his old friend Cherinto, and never becomes a truly callous criminal because he is never conscious of the seriousness of his actions. In spite of his numerous lies, Panfago is still compassionate and finds Ermegildo’s faith moving: “E ti giuro, ben mio, che mentre io giva / Piangendo fra’ i Littori al suo confronto: / Ti pareva finto il pianto, ed era vero.”<sup>316</sup> Recaredo wants the crown but he repents in the end and tries to save his brother, and finally Leovigildo, who would do anything to save his son, must abide by the laws of the country. The truth is that nobody wants to kill Ermegildo. His execution is the outcome of a series of unfortunate events and coincidences, none of which was meant to be deadly.

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<sup>315</sup>In order to placate Heaven, I will consume my eyes with tears within four walls until they are no more.” Ibid., 183.

<sup>316</sup>“And I swear that my tears were real when I was going around crying, even you though you thought they were faked.” Ibid., 164.

This dramaturgical indeterminacy undermines the very core of the seventeenth century Jesuitical tragedy, which relies on stark separation between the Christian hero and his heathen opponents.

Lo scontro fra il martire e il tiranno è considerato dalla trattatistica poetica gesuitica il nucleo della purgazione, della catarsi, ed ecco che al terrore e alla misericordia vengono sostituite altre coordinate, e cioè l'odio verso la religione antagonista rappresentata da un re tiranno e sanguinario e la fiducia nella religione cattolica e nella chiesa di Roma accresciuta e rafforzata appunto dall'abnegazione con cui il martire affronta la morte.<sup>317</sup>

Substituting the villainous tyrant with a loving father weakens the very basis of Jesuit tragedy, which needs the substantive presence of the despotic tyrant to function properly dramaturgically, and to be effective religiously and politically. Instead of the usual stark opposition between good and evil, the reader of *Ermegildo* must face the vagueness of righteousness, and the indistinctness and moral ambiguity of the characters. The puzzling questions that haunt the reader are: who is responsible for Ermegildo's death? Are all the characters collectively responsible, but not individually? Is Ermegildo's death due to Leovigildo's failure to convince him to abjure his faith, as Frare and Gazich believe? Is Hermenegildo's poor self-defense in front of the Council to blame? Where are the villains? Is this a world ruled by Fate?

The issue of responsibility is very relevant because if nobody is guilty for Ermegildo's execution then his death becomes a coincidence that could have been avoided. While the death of the tragic protagonist should be a choice as well as a destiny, in *Ermegildo* there's choice without the destiny. The protagonist's death could have been avoided if the characters had

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<sup>317</sup> "Jesuits' poetic treatises consider the clash between the martyr and the tyrant as the nucleus of purgation, and catharsis. Fear and pity are substituted by other tenets, such as the hatred toward the opposite faith, represented by the tyrant and bloody king, as well as the faith in the catholic religion, which is heightened and made strong by the personal abnegation with which the martyr faces death." R. Mercuri, "*La Reina di Scozia* di Federico della Valle e la forma della tragedia gesuita." *Calibano*, No. 4, 1979, 151.

foreseen the consequences of their actions. Cherinto could easily be pinpointed as the villain of the tragedy, except that he is acting solely to save his own life and not to harm Ermegildo. Moreover he commits suicide in the end, an act that proves he has a conscience and thus takes away some of his guilt.

The moral ambiguity of *Ermegildo* makes it a much darker play than the Spanish *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* and *La mayor corona*. The play conveys the unsettling notion that striving for goodness in a world where everybody lies and nobody is responsible for his actions is not only difficult but also unattainable. Together with a general mistrust towards court and monarchy, the author also stresses the unreliability of the laws.

Tesauro also displays a lukewarm interest in theological matters. One thing that immediately strikes the reader of *Ermegildo* is its limited involvement in theology. While Hernando de Ávila and his team of writers, and Lope de Vega were all interested in demonstrating the centrality of the Trinitarian dogma to Catholicism of the Counter-Reformation, Tesauro uses this topic merely as an accessory to ignite the main action of the play. Its presence is incidental and underplayed. The Trinity is instrumental in justifying the basis of the conflictive relationship between Ermegildo and his father, however, the playwright does not engage the dogma theologically or historically, and he focuses mainly on building the factual circumstances that would lead to Ermegildo's death. Tesauro's main concern resides in advancing the literary potential of the story, not in its dogmatic content and theological potential. In *Ermegildo* the spiritual and the aesthetical agendas follow opposite trajectories and occupy different hierarchical places.

Frare and Gazich doubt the religious intent of the tragedy because Recaredo is the only character who converts to Catholicism, “ma non fornisce alcuna garanzia sul futuro instaurarsi di

una politica realmente cristiana.”<sup>318</sup> They also maintain that Leovigildo’s last lines “Sei tu quegli, mio Figlio: o nella mente / Mi dipinge ‘l tuo volto il mio desio” insinuate doubts about the reality of Ermegildo’s heavenly triumph, thus detracting from the devotional atmosphere of the final scene.<sup>319</sup>

Ermegildo’s acceptance of the prohibition to spread Catholicism is also problematic. The hero agrees to keep his faith a private matter in exchange for his right to live in Spain. He never breaks his word because when he discusses Christianity with Recaredo and gives him the ring, Ermegildo believes that Recaredo is a Catholic. Therefore, his execution is not a punishment for spreading the gospel but an illegal retribution for not abjuring his faith.

The privacy of Ermegildo’s religion clashes against all previous dramatic depictions of the Visigothic prince. Tesauro’s hero is not a crusader fighting heresy. He does not want to fight his father and, in fact, he offers peace immediately. He meekly accepts to abide by a law that prohibits him to evangelize, which is Jesus’ commandment to all Christians. He does not show the usual hunger for martyrdom exhibited by previous dramatic incarnations of Hermenegildo. While he accepts his martyrdom, he is not active in the practice of converting people to Catholicism, which makes him an unusual Christian hero. His death is about his refusal to abjure his faith as much as it is about the failing of his rhetoric to defend himself.

The indeterminacy of the character about issues such as the necessity of evangelization, martyrdom as personal destiny, and the reaffirmation of post-Tridentine dogmatic ideology contradict the principal tenets of Jesuit tragedy and leave ample space for interpretation. Tesauro is conscious of breaking away from the principles of Jesuit tragedy and he is not too concerned about it. His interest resides in confusing the boundaries between genres such as tragedy, comedy

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<sup>318</sup> “[*Ermegildo*] does not guarantee the future establishment of truly Christian politics.” Frare and Gazich, xxxiii.

<sup>319</sup> “Is it you, my son? Or is it my desire to see you that depicts your face?” Tesauro, *Ermegildo*, xxxiv.

and tragicomedy. He moves away from the rigid classicism that characterized his *Hermenegildus*, and emphasizes “la commistione dei generi” (the genre mix) and a stronger “libertà compositiva” (freedom of composition).<sup>320</sup> Sarnelli defines the artistic intent supporting *Hermenegildus* as “classico-devozionale,” and that of *Ermegildo* as “omnirappresentativo,” in that *Ermegildo* attempts to draw on different stylistic traditions to create a tragedy that would honor the classics while representing the taste of his contemporaries.<sup>321</sup>

The modernity of *Ermegildo* depends on the fact that its author overcomes the stereotypical polarization of ideas and characters of Jesuit drama. Tesauro problematizes the function of theatre as a container of Jesuit theological truth by indissolubly associating the truth with the linguistic process used to establish it.<sup>322</sup> The law and its construal constitute the moral dilemma of *Ermegildo*, as the play tries to illustrate the difficulties of applying the righteous objectivity of the laws in a world where individuals read, discuss and interpret them subjectively. In brief, the general question is whether it is fathomable for the law to maintain its claim to justice when it comes under the scrutiny of rhetoric, the quintessential art of persuasion, repeatedly attacked as “un’arma dell’inganno e della menzogna” (“a weapon of deception and lie”) since the times of Plato.<sup>323</sup>

As a tragedy dealing with a powerful Jesuit cultural hero, *Ermegildo* is supposed to portray the historical truth about the death of Hermenegildo in a fashion suitable to move/persuade the audience, to enlighten it about the dogma of the Trinity, to renew its spiritual

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<sup>320</sup> Mauro Sarnelli, 268.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>322</sup> “Con il Tesauro, grazie alla consapevolezza teorica del problema della verità connesso all’esistenza stessa del linguaggio, possiamo mettere a fuoco questo tema e tentare di comprendere la funzione che la retorica gioca in questo genere testuale.” (“Thanks to Tesauro’s theoretical understanding that the problem of truth is connected to the very existence of speech, the researcher can try to focus this topic and comprehend the function rhetoric plays in this textual genre.”) Giovanna Zanlonghi, 49.

<sup>323</sup> Benedetta Craveri, “La retorica? Bisogna rivalutarla,” *La Repubblica*, 27 giugno 2000. This article contains an interview with Ezio Raimondi, one of Italy’s leading experts on the literature of the seventeenth century.

commitment to the post-Tridentine Church, to awaken the spectators to the risks and rewards of personal sacrifice, and to obliquely address the problematic topic of regicide and Christendom. For a variety of reasons, it does not do these things. *Ermegildo* avoids the Society of Jesus's agendas and chooses to discuss the senselessness of human actions and the injustice of secular politics. Not only does the play interpret human struggle for justice and peace as unattainable, it also features an incomplete Christian hero who manages to sacrifice his life almost by default. Tesauro expresses a very gloomy notion of humanity without providing a strong and hopeful counterpoint in religious devotion. The protagonist's ascension to heaven in Tesauro's play leaves the public with the promise of Recaredo's conversion but also with a lot of questions and unresolved issues. While the hero gains eternal life for his martyrdom, his sacrifice fails to inspire others, and does not clarify, or justify, the moral grayness of the tragedy, which reads more a pessimistic reflection on the human destiny than a call to arms for Catholic ideology.

His own literary aspirations are far more important to Emanuele Tesauro than the theological urgency of the Society of Jesus. Having left the religious order in 1637, Tesauro does not feel the pressure of composing a martyr tragedy *tout court*. He exploits the story of Hermenegildo for its popularity but he strips his hero of all the elements that had turned him into a trope for the Jesuits. Tesauro's literary ambitions, his maturity, his intellectual growth over forty years, his broken relationship with the Society of Jesus, together with the peculiar history of the Italian theatre of the seventeenth century, help explain why *Ermegildo* struggles to fit within the epistemological category of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*. This is not to say that Tesauro altogether avoids religion because that would not be possible given the topic of the story and the socio-political frame within which the play was written and staged. However, it is clear that the religious and political agendas take second place to the artistic agenda of the author, who



was striving to create a modern tragedy inspired by the aesthetical principles he had discussed in his *Cannocchiale aristotelico*. While theology provides the ideological background of the play, the artistic focus is on the structural and dramaturgical elements of the plot.

Besides the fact that *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* was a piece composed by Jesuit priests for a Jesuit college production, and *Ermegildo* was a play written by an ex-Jesuit for a court event, there is another reason why these two tragedies appear so profoundly unlike each other and it has to do with the historical development of theatre in the two countries. The Italian theatre in the seventeenth century differs enormously from the Spanish drama of the Golden Age. Lope had made clear in his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* that the writer should be concerned with pleasing the public, not with the pedantic respect of artistic rules written centuries ago. Spanish theatre practitioners considered acquiring and maintaining the interest of an audience the essential duty of the writer because their livelihood depended on the audience support. This is not to say that there was no debate in Spain over literary models, but Spanish intellectuals do not share the obsession of the Italians to codify structural rules and literary principles to use in tragedy. This diametrically opposite vision of the objective of the theatre also helps to explain the very different evolution of theatre in the two countries. While Spain developed both sophisticated court and public theatres, the theatrical practice of Italy was mainly the terrain of the intellectual academies, and the single regional courts.

For Italian intellectuals the discussion of tragedy as dramatic literature was part of the process of historical recuperation, which was perceived as the optimal tool to bestow authoritative power on the new literature of the post-Renaissance time. As an intellectual born in the northern part of Italy, Tesauro absorbed and elaborated the many debates over the form and

content of tragedy. The next section will discuss Tesauro's project as a modern tragedy in relation with the dramaturgical choices he makes in *Ermegildo*.

### 4.2.3 *Ermegildo* as a modern tragedy

Tesauro adopts a regular structure for his *Ermegildo*. He uses the five act format, choruses in between the acts, and a variety of metric forms for the acts, the choruses and the protasis. The author also follows the pseudo-Aristotelian unities of place, time and action, limits the number of soliloquies, abolishes the messenger as a dramaturgical tool to forward the action, and restricts the role of the chorus to that of commentary rather than character.<sup>324</sup> Within the larger structure of classical tragedy, however, Tesauro experiments with the tragic form in order to fashion a modern tragedy. He expands the number of characters to sixteen (going against the praxis of limiting them to twelve or fourteen), surpasses the number of scenes usually allotted to each act, writes a long tragedy that exceeds the normal four hours of representation, and composes a prologue that does not relate to the tragedy itself.<sup>325</sup>

Frare and Gazich raise the characterization of the servant as another point of Tesauro's departure from classical tragedy. They argue that Panfago functions as a comedic character and stands as the author's attempt to mix tragic and comedic genres in creating almost a *grazioso* figure. Although I disagree that Panfago is a comedic character "di chiara matrice plautina," ("clearly derived from Plautus") as the two historians sustain, and that "sembrerebbe cercare, sia pure senza trovarla compiutamente, neppure nel male, una propria dignità tragica," I believe that

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<sup>324</sup> Frare and Gazich notice how Tesauro allows the chorus to partake in the dialogue with other characters only once, in act V, where the chorus engages in a conversation with Ermegildo. Frare and Gazich, ix.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid, x.

Tesauro is clearly playing with subverting the traditional role of the tragic servant.<sup>326</sup> The author gives Panfago the power to actualize Cherinto's designs, and makes him directly responsible for the unplanned execution of Ermegildo. While Panfago retains the quality of the servant's obedience, reverence, and respect for his master, in his case Cherinto, he also epitomizes a new class of tragic servant, able to make his own decision, ready to act tempestuously, and capable of maneuvering every situation to his own advantage. If it is true that those are the comedic attributes of Plautus's servant, or even the *commedia dell'arte* Harlequin, it is also true that Panfago never adopts the behavior of the comic servant, and never assumes the pattern of speech and tricks associated with those characters. He always remains dignified even when he does not quite know what he is going to do to save himself.

Emanuele Tesauro's linguistic and stylistic choices are also a reflection of the author's modern taste, inspired by the baroque *concettismo* and filtered through the earthiness of Seneca's theatre.<sup>327</sup> The abundant use of metaphors and analogies multiplies the interpretive levels of the story, creating intellectual reverberations that echo throughout the play while the thorough utilization of figures of speech such as synecdoche, oxymoron, litotes, hyperboles, and metonymies create the effect of *meraviglia*, and turn the narrative into a complex structure to decipher. Unlike many other dramatists of the period such as Sforza Pallavicino, Federico della Valle and Carlo De' Dottori, Tesauro disagrees with the notion that *decorum* and verisimilitude necessarily mean linearity and simplicity, and he unifies "col genere più elevato il massimo di ingegnosità" (the more elevated genre with the maximum of wit.)<sup>328</sup> The last scene of the play is emblematic of the author's penchant for ornate dialogue and rich imagery, as the different

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<sup>326</sup> "...[Panfago] appears to look for his own tragic dignity without ever finding it, not even in his evil doing." Ibid., x-xi.

<sup>327</sup> Tesauro had been inspired by Seneca to the point of writing his own version of the story of Oedipus and Phaedra. His tragedies *Edipo* and *Phaedra* are strongly indebted to the style of the Latin dramatist.

<sup>328</sup> Frare and Gazich, xii.

characters engage in a choral description of Ermegildo's death and subsequent transfiguration into sainthood. Franca Angelini points out how Tesauero's overtly elaborated linguistic description and layered spectacular images strip the events of their devotional content instead of enhancing it.

Il teatro di Tesauero procede come festa di musica e di parole, cancella la trama edificante terribile della lotta tra padre e figlio e del martirio per la fede ed esplose in continui giochi di parole, in arguzie verbali, in immagini concettose.<sup>329</sup>

The author's unconventional and modernizing efforts are also evident in how he approaches the characterization of the tragic hero. The ongoing debate over the correct understanding of Aristotle's intermediate character, one who should be neither too guilty to elicit sympathy, nor too innocent to appear inhuman, does not concern the author of *Ermegildo*. He ignores altogether the truism that someone who dies a martyr must be inherently innocent and does not take into any consideration the possibility of bridging the gap between Aristotle's demands that the hero be an intermediate figure and the devotional imperative of religious theatre that the protagonist be innocent.

Tesauero ignores the fact that his Ermegildo is utterly innocent. He is respectful of the laws of the land, he is not an invading aggressor, nor the typical paladin of the Christian faith. He is the quintessential victim whose traditional role as sacrificial offering is compromised by the fact that there is hardly anyone responsible for his death. His innocence and the lack of a villain accountable for his execution detract from the transcendent power associated with martyrdom and relegate his death to the realm of individual privacy.

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<sup>329</sup> "Tesauero's theatre is a feast of music and words, it erases the edifying plot of the terrible fight between father and son, as well as the the martyrdom for the faith, and it explodes in continuous word plays, verbal wit and artificial images." Franca Angelini, *Il teatro barocco* (Rome-Bari: Editori Laterza, 1993), 207-208.

As the next section will demonstrate, Tesauro's *Ermegildo* could not be further away from Pallavicino's assertive *Ermenegildo*, who does not display any sign of theological weakness and is less problematic and difficult to categorize within the world of the Society of Jesus. Pallavicino's hero 'decides' to fight for his faith and accepts the penalty that comes with his decision, while Tesauro's accepts death but renounces the evangelizing mission that pertains to and defines all Christians. The discrepancies between these two incarnations of *Hermenegildo* can be explained in light of Tesauro's distance from Rome, the center of Jesuit religious orthodoxy, his exit from the Society of Jesus, and the fact that he wrote his tragedy for the court.

In spite of its problematic nature, *Ermegildo* enjoyed a formidable success. Not only did it gain Tesauro renewed fame in the dramatic cliques of Europe, it was also translated into Latin by Jesuit priest Nicolas de Avancini for a 1662 production at the Viennese court. With this translation the journey of the 1621 *Hermenegildus* comes full circle, from Latin to Italian (with the translation done by the Jesuit college of Ponte and Tesauro's own *Ermegildo*), and from Italian back to Latin with Avancino's *Hermenegildus tragoedia christiana scripta italico idiomate ab Emanuele Thesauro latinis musis donata a Nicolao Avancino Societatis Iesu*.<sup>330</sup>

#### 4.3 SFORZA PALLAVICINO'S *ERMENEGILDO MARTIRE*

Born in Rome on November 28, 1607, Marquis Sforza Pallavicino later entered the Collegio Romano where he studied literature, philosophy, and jurisprudence, and graduated in 1625. He became interested in theology and started studying in the same college under Giovanni de Lugo, receiving a degree in theology in 1628. His interest in literature led him to join the academic

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<sup>330</sup> Pierantonio Frare, 47.

circles that gathered in the palace of Prince and Cardinal Maurizio of Savoy, and in the house of Paolo Mancini, where the Accademia degli Umoristi resided.<sup>331</sup> His reputation was such that Alessandro Tassoni, the well-known author of *La secchia rapita*, changed the last two verses of the Venetian edition of his poem to include a celebration of Pallavicino. However, Pallavicino's initial decision to pursue a literary career changed drastically due to his resolution to enter the Society of Jesus in 1637. He became increasingly active in the propagandistic intentions of the religious order, partaking enthusiastically in the ideological debates of the Counter-Reformation. Father Vincenzo Caraffa, General of the Society of Jesus, asked Pallavicino to write a treatise to confute both the accusations of priest Giulio Clementi Scotti's *De potestate Pontificis in Societatem Jesu*, addressed to the Pope and targeting the activity of the Jesuits, and Melchiorre Incofer's *Monarchia solipsorum*, in which the priest criticized the management of the Jesuit colleges. As a reply and counterattack to both books, Pallavicino composed the *Vindicationes Societatis Jesu*, in which he deconstructed the arguments advanced by his religious opponents and endorsed the religious and educational judgments of the Society of Jesus. He received another illustrious assignment in 1651 when he was asked to join a commission of seven cardinals and thirteen theologians who were to rule over the religious ideas of Cornelius Jansen, whom the bishops of France considered heretical. While deliberating about Jansen's theological positions, which the council ruled heretical in 1653, Pallavicino started to write *Storia del Concilio di Trento*, which was published between 1656 and 1657. This is a monumental work retracing the history of the 1545 Catholic Council and providing a commentary about its theological resolutions. Together with the history of the Jesuits written by Paolo Sarpi, Pallavicino's book represents one of the most thorough surveys of the pivotal and historic decisions made during the Council of Trent. It was translated into Latin in 1673 to guarantee its

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<sup>331</sup> Affò Ireneo, *Memorie della vita e degli studi del cardinale Sforza Pallavicino* (Parma: 1794), 7.

access to all Jesuit colleges. In 1659, Pallavicino received the title of cardinal, a recognition that also reflected Pallavicino's close friendship with Fabio Chigi, who had become Pope Alessandro VII in 1655.<sup>332</sup> During his lifetime, he published *I fasti sacri* (1632), a poem he dedicated to Pope Urban VIII, and two books of literary theory *Considerazioni sopra l'arte dello stile e del dialogo* (1646) and *Avvertimenti per chi scrive in lingua italiana* (1665).

Pallavicino was also fascinated by the theatre which was staged twice a year in the Collegio Romano for "la consegna dei premi di fine anno e le rappresentazioni durante il carnevale."<sup>333</sup> He wrote in 1640 a comprehensive account of his involvement in organizing the celebrations for the one hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Society of Jesus (*Relazione delle feste celebrate nel Collegio Romano per il centesimo anno dopo la sua fondazione*) and his only tragedy *Il martire Ermenegildo*, which was staged in Rome during the Carnival of 1644. Pallavicino died in Rome in 1667.

#### 4.3.1 The genesis of *Ermenegildo martire*

The 1640 celebration of the foundation of the order of the Society of Jesus was an event of incredible importance for the Jesuits living in Rome. It was in 1540 Rome that Pope Paul III Farnese (1534-1549), the same pope who had called the Council of Trent, had given Ignatius of Loyola and his followers his stamp of approval. Moreover, Rome had hosted since 1551 the

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<sup>332</sup> "Nè il Chigi salito a tanta altezza, si mostrò dimentico, cioè indegno di tale amico; anzi gli diede sí efficaci e pubblici segni di benevolenza, che tutta la corte rivolse gli occhi al gesuita, come ad arbitro di quel pontificato." ("Raised to such position, Chigi never forgot or proved unworthy of his friend, and he gave him effective and public signs of his benevolence to the point that the entire court looked upon the Jesuit [Sforza Pallavicino] as the arbiter of that Pontificate." Sforza Pallavicino, *Discorso premesso all'Arte della Perfezione Cristiana di Pietro Giordani* (Milano: 1820), 15

<sup>333</sup> "...for the end of the year graduation ceremony and during the Carnival." Bruna Filippi, "Il teatro al Collegio Romano: dal testo drammatico al contesto scenico," *I Gesuiti e i Primordi del Teatro barocco in Europa*, 174.

renowned Collegio Romano, which included the Germanic College, the Roman Seminary, and the English College.<sup>334</sup> The centenary of the foundation of the order celebrated the formidably solid presence of the Jesuits in the city that was the very heart of Christianity, and their achievements in advancing education and supporting the fight against the Protestant Reformation.

The festivities commenced in 1639 in and around the Chiesa del Gesù, the main Jesuit church in Rome. The interiors of the church hosted rich decorations provided by cardinal Antonio Barberino, nephew of Urban VIII, and accommodated the paraphernalia for a *teatro della morte* as the church is entirely draped with black and “al centro sta il grandioso monumento funebre di Andrea Sacchi dedicato alle esequie di tutti i benefattori dell’ordine.”<sup>335</sup> Outside, a monumental stage machine showed statues of Virtue and Time, displaying one of the most common Jesuit images, that of Virtue conquering Time.<sup>336</sup> The following year the celebration continued and Pallavicino appears to have been the organizer of all the events. He wrote a detailed account of his experience to a friend in his *Relazione scritta ad un amico delle feste celebrate nel Collegio Romano per il centesimo anno dopo la sua fondazione* where he enthusiastically described the success of the celebration. The celebrations started officially on August 2, 1640, in the courtyard of the Collegio Romano thanks to the contributions of the students who paid a total of 1500 scudi.<sup>337</sup> The choice of staging the visual apparatus in the college was appropriate because it dealt with the disciplines taught in the college and showcased

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<sup>334</sup> *Enciclopedia dello spettacolo*, 1162.

<sup>335</sup> “There was a grand funereal monument designed by Andrea Sacchi in the middle [of the church] which was dedicated to all the benefactors of the order.” Silvia Carandini, *Teatro e spettacolo nel Seicento* (Roma: Bulzoni Editore), 62.

<sup>336</sup> For a detailed account of the ceremonies, check Giacinto Gigli, *Diario Romano, 1608-1670*. Giuseppe Ricciotti, ed. (Roma: Tuminelli Editore, 1958), and Francis Haskell, *Mecenati e pittori: Studio sui rapporti tra arte e società italiana nell’età barocca* (Florence: Sansoni, 1966).

<sup>337</sup> See E.Rinaldi, *La fondazione del Collegio Romano* (Arezzo, 1939).



the former students who had studied in the college and had proceeded to become authoritative figures in the Church.

Risolsero adunque di porre in mostra non solo la nobiltà e il numero delle discipline quivi insegnate, ma l'insieme dei discepoli quivi eruditi: facendo come un censo dei più illustri personaggi i quali fossero usciti da questa sola colonia conceduta alla famiglia di S. Ignazio: e d'effigiare insieme tutte le altre università nelle quali essi insegnano alla gioventù studiosa tutte le facoltà convenienti al loro istituto ... perciò honorarono insieme la memoria di coloro, i quali per l'eminenza del grado s'erano fatti cospicui.<sup>338</sup>

The lavish display erected in the courtyard included an enormous statue of Pope Urban VIII, emblems and images of Jesuit cardinals and missionaries, paintings of cities and regions such as Brazil, Peru, Mexico, China, and the Philippines, where the Jesuits worked actively to evangelize the native populations, and effigies of all the school subjects taught in the Collegio Romano. The intent of the apparatus was propagandistic, and commemorative of the results achieved by Jesuit cultural heroes during the first one hundred years of the order. It also reaffirmed education and evangelization as the two principal objectives of the Society of Jesus. Discussing the Jesuit theatre of emblems, Bruna Filippi underlines the rhetorical agendas hosted in this peculiar seventeenth century tools of visual communication.

These verbal-iconographic compositions, which were used to illustrate the principal theme of the ceremony, were not a mere period detail or an ornamental device but constituted a means of expression which, by virtue of the particular relations governing the association of text and image,

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<sup>338</sup> “They decided to stage not only the nobility and the number of disciplines that were taught in the college, but also the students that received their education here. By selecting the most illustrious graduates of this colony given to the family of Saint Ignatius, they celebrated also all the other colleges wher they now teach to the studious youth all the faculties convenient to their use ... therefore they honored the memory of those who were conspicuous for the eminence of their status.” Sforza Pallavicino, *Relazione scritta ad un amico delle feste celebrate nel Collegio Romano della Compagnia di Gesù, per l'anno centesimo dopo la fondazione di essa*, 18.

mobilized complex rhetorical, moral, and spiritual elements simultaneously.<sup>339</sup>

The 1640 event included a distribution of charitable gifts to the poor and the awarding of prizes to the best students of the college. The celebration ended when the Pope honored the work of the Society of Jesus by visiting the display. Pallavicino describes the euphoria of the event in an otherworldly light by saying that “Sporgevansi allo stesso tempo odorate piogge di fiori, rimbombava l’aria di dolcissimi suoni e canti. Insomma sto per dire che vi si godesse una stilla di quelle pure contentezze, le quali si riservano alle anime fortunate del Paradiso.”<sup>340</sup> While Pallavicino planned only the erudite apparatus staged in January at the Collegio Romano, the celebrations for the centenary of the Society of Jesus lasted all year around and included the Quarant’ore ceremony, processions, *tableaux vivants*, fireworks, and scenic displays.<sup>341</sup>

Pallavicino’s interest in theatre and theatrical events lasted his entire life. In 1654, he composed a detailed description of the celebrations staged for the first trip of Queen Cristina of Sweden to Rome. Here, he describes in detail the spectacular receptions European and Italian cities had organized for the monarch who had abjured Protestantism, converted to Catholicism, was now going to meet the Pope, and ended up moving to Rome permanently in 1658.<sup>342</sup> Pallavicino speaks enthusiastically of the religious devotion of the queen and the exemplarity and significance of her conversion, as well as of the welcoming parades, tournaments, processions, triumphal entrances, and stage representations organized in her honor in Innsbruck,

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<sup>339</sup> Bruna Filippi, “The Theatre of Emblems: Rhetoric and the Jesuit Stage,” *Diogenes*, 1996; 44; 67. I used the online version of this article, which can be found at <http://dio.sagepub.com>

<sup>340</sup> “A perfumed rain of flowers fell, the air was pregnant with festive and mellifluous sounds and singing. It was comparable to enjoying a crumb of the pure joys reserved to the fortunate souls of Heaven.” Sforza Pallavicino, *Relazione scritta ad un amico*, 32.

<sup>341</sup> See Silvia Carandini, 62-64.

<sup>342</sup> Sforza Pallavicino, *Descrizione del primo viaggio fatto dalla Regina di Svezia Cristina Maria, convertita alla religione cattolica e delle accoglienze quivi avute sino alla sua partenza* (Roma: Tipografia Salviucci, 1838).

Trent, Mantova, Ferrara, Venice, and Rome. Both the political impact of her conversion and the spectacular entertainments that framed it utterly capture the curiosity of the writer.

It is likely that his profound interest in the infinite potential of theatrical events, his successful experience as the organizer of the celebration for the centenary of the Society of Jesus, and the satisfaction he received from supervising all aspects of the artistic apparatus might be responsible for Pallavicino's decision to write, in 1644, *Ermenegildo martire*, his only dramatic work.

Pallavicino downplays his intellectual investment in composing the tragedy by saying that one of his old teachers asked him to write it and that it took him less than a month to do so.<sup>343</sup> However, his statement reflects the customary use of the dramatist to blame whatever flaws the public might have found in the play on the fact that the author did not have sufficient time, or did not commit himself entirely to the project. It follows the habitual *captatio benevolentiae* of the prologue, in which the author ostensibly perorates the audience to induce a positive response as well as to ask forgiveness for his work's shortcomings. The result of such disingenuous claims was to set up the audience for something less than perfect and then mesmerize them with a tragedy of superior quality. Not only did Pallavicino care tremendously about the success of *Ermenegildo martire*, he also hoped to use his tragedy as the textual platform for the Italian theatrical revolution.

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<sup>343</sup> “Mentre l'autore preparava per le stampe un tomo da lui composto sopra la Filosofia Morale, nella cui lezione lo impiegano ora i suoi Superiori, fu persuaso da un suo antico, e riverito maestro di spendere alcuni giorni, che gli rimanevano disoccupati, nello scrivere un tragedia. Egli accettò l'impresa, ed in minor tempo d'un mese la trasse a fine.” (“While the author was in the process of publishing his book on moral philosophy, which is the subject his superiors have assigned him to teach, an old and much loved teacher of his persuaded him to spend a few days he had available to write a tragedy. He accepted the task and finished it in less than a month.”) Sforza Pallavicino, *Ermenegildo martire*, 134.

### 4.3.2 Plot description

*Ermenegildo martire* starts in *media res*, with Ermenegildo already in prison, awaiting to be sentenced. Pallavicino abolishes the prologue as a mechanical way to explain what happened before the beginning of the tragedy, and instead uses two minor characters, Arminio, servant to Ingonda, and Ildoro, servant to king Leovigildo, to discuss prior events and their effect on the present time. They briefly converse about the reason that led to the conflict between Ermenegildo and his father and blame it on Queen Gosvinta's attempt to forcibly baptize Ingonda in order to convert her to Arianism. They recall how Ermenegildo moved to Seville after he heard what had happened to his wife and how he himself had converted to Catholicism and was baptized by his uncle Leandro. In the meantime, he decided to send Ingonda to a safe place in the Pyrenees because his father had declared war against him. Arminio and Ildoro remember how Leovigildo had paid Ermenegildo's allies so that they would not support his son, how Recaredo had tried to convince his brother to surrender, how Ermenegildo had followed his brother's advice, and how the king initially pardoned his son but then, upon hearing of Ingonda's absence, sentenced him to prison. In scene 2 of act I, the two servants discuss how Ingonda disguised herself as the son of the French ambassador Aurelio and returned to plead with Leovigildo for her husband's life. In the last scene of the act, Aurelio brings to Leovigildo the plea of the French monarch to save Ermenegildo and ask permission for his son (Ingonda) to see him in prison.

Act II deals entirely with the meeting of Ingonda and Ermenegildo, its arrangement, and its consequences. Scene 5 describes the spouses' reunion which is complicated by the facts that Ermido, who is present as Leovigildo's spy, prevents Ingonda from revealing her identity to

Ermenegildo. A disguised Ingonda tries in every way to convince Ermenegildo to allow the return of his wife, knowing that her return could convince Leovigildo of the fact there is no plan to dethrone him, nor any secret alliance with France. When Ermenegildo is about to accept the suggestion, he sees the ring that he had given to Ingonda before her departure on the finger of whom he believes a young and attractive man. Ermenegildo misreads his wife's attempt to communicate her identity by showing the ring, and he believes instead that Ingonda has given away his present to the man in front of him as a love token. He storms out of the room and complains about Ingonda's betrayal with Leandro and Recaredo. In act III, Leovigildo appears resolute to sentence Ermenegildo to death if he does not abjure his faith. Ingonda, still disguised as a man, intercedes and says that Ingonda will return home soon. Ermenegildo reacts with disdain at such a proposition coming from the very man he believes his wife's lover, but Ingonda gives him the ring and says that Ingonda asked him to return it to Ermenegildo as a symbol of her undying love for him. Ermenegildo is relieved at this confirmation of his wife's faithfulness but the remark of the king "É secca a tua salute ogni speranza: / La sposa che vedrai sarà la scure. / Impetrar quella grazia il reo non merta, / Ch'ei prima osò di rifiutare offerta" abruptly breaks the happy moment.<sup>344</sup> Aurelio cleverly reminds the king that if he murders Ermenegildo, and if Recaredo should die too, he would be left with no heir to the throne. In scene 4, Ingonda considers telling the king that Ermenegildo's son is dead. She hopes the old man would be so moved by the news regarding his grandson that he might reconsider his position and pardon Ermenegildo.

At the beginning of act IV, Ildoro tells Ermido that the French ambassador has informed the king that his grandson is dead. Aware of Leovigildo's evilness, Ildoro regrets that decision

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<sup>344</sup> "Your safety is dry to all hopes. The only wife you will see is the ax. The guilty man cannot expect grace when he has refused the offer in the past." Sforza Pallavicino, *Ermenegildo martire*, 64.

because it might pave the way for Ermenegildo's demise. Because the child was a descendant of the Catholic French monarchy due to Ingonda, and his death cut that connection, the king might believe that killing Ermenegildo would not bring about any dynastic war with France. The servant's prediction proves to be true in scene 4 where Leovigildo, Silvano and Olibrio, the Arian priest, talk about the threat posed by Ermenegildo to the kingdom and interpret the inscription found on the ring "Non mi spezza un tal sangue, anzi mi indura" ("This blood does not break me, instead it fortifies me") as the prince's determination to overthrow his father. In the last scene of this act, Leovigildo faces his son with two options: that of keeping his faith and being decapitated in the tower, or of abjuring Catholicism and being restored to all his past honors. The hero willingly accepts the death sentence and the act closes in an atmosphere of gloom and sadness.

In the first scene of act V, Armido relates to Ingonda and Aurelio that the king, under the influence of Gosvinta, has resolved to kill Ermenegildo because of suspicion of a possible pact between his son and the French ambassador. The queen and the king interpreted the ring that Ingonda had given back to Ermenegildo as a gift to ratify the support of the French monarch against the Arian Visigoths. In scene 2, Arminio questions Ildoro about the latest news from the palace, but Ildoro says he cannot stop because he must deliver an urgent message from the king to the tower of Seville. Worried by the reluctance of the servant to talk, Ingonda reveals her identity and demands to know the content of the dispatch. Ildoro says that message was oral and repeats the sibylline message given by the king: "Vola, mi disse; ed in mio nome imponi, / che sopra Ermenegildo e la sua vita / l'ultim'ordine mio non abbia effetto, / ma ciò che innanzi

comandai si faccia: / per fretta mando te di scritto in vece.”<sup>345</sup> Ingonda feels sure that the order that Leovigildo wants to rectify is one that sanctioned Ermenegildo’s freedom from prison, and that the new one is authorizing the death penalty. Therefore, she implores Ildoro to delay his mission until Aurelio comes back from the palace, where he has gone to clarify the misunderstanding over the suspected coup, to reveal Ingonda’s disguise, and to explain the significance of the ring. Ildoro agrees to wait thinking that he is helping Ermenegildo. The following scene reveals that Recaredo had talked to Leovigildo and convinced him of Ermenegildo’s innocence, and that the message Ildoro was supposed to deliver was the injunction to free the prisoner immediately. The conclusion of the scene is particularly effective because nobody knows yet whether the sentence has been carried out or not. The following scene sees Leovigildo reaching the prison and asking the warder to bring out his son. When the king hears that his first-born is dead, he repents all his mistakes and crimes. His desperation is as great now as was his ambition and obstinacy before. The warder repeats the last speech the tragic hero pronounced before being executed, which reaffirms the innocence of the protagonist and extends forgiveness to all the guilty characters. In scene 5, Ingonda is desperate for the death of her husband as well as for being the one unknowingly responsible for it and she plans to consign herself to Leovigildo to die also as a martyr. Leandro stops her and reassures her that he has seen Ermenegildo raised to the glory of Heaven. The play ends with the description of the transfiguration of the saint.

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<sup>345</sup> “Fly, he told me, and in my name command that the last order I gave over Ermenegildo and his life be not executed, and that instead what I ordered before be done. For the urgency of the matter I send you instead of a written message.” Ibid, 112.

### 4.3.3 *Ermenegildo martire* and the Jesuit tragedy of the Collegio Romano

Sforza Pallavicino did not concentrate all of his aesthetical ideas in one text. They can be found in the “Discorso” that concludes *Ermenegildo martire*, in *Del Bene*, a treatise in four volumes published the same year as his tragedy, in *Trattato dello Stile e del Dialogo*, and ultimately in *Arte della Perfezione Cristiana*. The roots of artistic beauty and the poetical sublime deeply interested the author, and he composed many poetical works to celebrate famous and powerful people of the time.<sup>346</sup> The fact that most of these writings fall under the category of *poesia d’occasione* does not undermine the evidence that Pallavicino felt an affinity with literary works and used them extensively throughout his life.

In order to understand the aesthetical ideas embraced in *Ermenegildo martire*, it is relevant to look specifically at *Del Bene*, the text that is chronologically closer to the tragedy. This decision is supported by the fact that the author had already changed his viewpoint in 1646 when he published his *Trattato dello Stile del Dialogo*. In her philological analysis of *Del Bene* and *Trattato dello Stile e del Dialogo*, Laura Volpe established that Pallavicino wrote both books at the same time, but I argue that since the date of publication of the *Trattato* follows *Del Bene* by two years, the author might have edited and modified his ideas, which accounts for divergent aesthetical conception between the two books.<sup>347</sup>

*Del Bene* is a treatise on moral philosophy, and consists of a series of dialogues among four characters on the topic of the true essence of human nature. The second section of the book

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<sup>346</sup> Some of these poetical compositions are *Il dialogo tra la pace e la Guerra nel giorno della creazione di N.S. Papa Urbano VIII, nel principio dell’anno V*, the *Canzone per Giovanni Ciampoli*, the *Poesia nell’ottavo anniversario dell’essaltazione al Pontificato di Papa Urbano VIII al 6 Agosto 1629*, *Canzone in morte di Serenissima Caterina, principessa di Toscana, duchessa di Mantova*, and finally *Ode in lode del Principe Don Mattia de’Medici*. All these works can be found in the manuscript 2121 at the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome, Italy.

<sup>347</sup> Laura Volpe, *Le idee estetiche del cardinale Sforza Pallavicino* (Castelvetrano, 1930), 5-7.



pertains to the present research, specifically chapters 48 to 56. In chapter 49, Querengo, one of the interlocutors, exposes the three intellectual operations of knowing. Addressing the first one, which he calls *prima apprensione*, he states that the intellect apprehends “l’oggetto tra le sue mani, senza però autenticarlo per vero né riprovarlo per falso.”<sup>348</sup> The second modality of knowing, called *giudicio*, is an operation formally opposite to the first because in this moment the intellect explores and determines the truthfulness of the object “come il giudice del tribunale, così egli proferisce sentenza intorno alla verità o falsità dell’oggetto.”<sup>349</sup> The *discorso*, third and final of intellect’s operations, synthesizes the previous two moments, and reaches a more perfected experience of knowing because it relates and “discorre di mano in mano ad altre verità più remote” (“it brings about other remote truths.”)<sup>350</sup>

While the author states that the *prima apprensione* is the least perfect of the three epistemological operations, he is also clear in defending it from attacks of superficiality by saying that its power resides in its ability to capture human attention and bring pleasure to the public.

Tuttavia la prima apprensione è ancora partecipe di qualche pregio, ed è material di qualche gaudio. Nol veggiamo noi nei favoleggiamenti poetici? Ogni età, ogni sesso, ogni condizione di mortali si lascia con diletto incantar dalla favola, imprigionar dalla scena.<sup>351</sup>

The arts are for Pallavicino an episteme in that they can foster a form of knowledge that presupposes and precedes the determination of truth. It is an elementary form of knowledge

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<sup>348</sup> “...the object in its hand, without identifying it for real nor discarding it as false.” Sforza Pallavicino, *Del Bene*, in *Biblioteca Enciclopedica Italiana*, vol. XXXIII (Milan: 1834), 525.

<sup>349</sup> “...like a judge in the tribunal, it determines the truthfulness or falsity of the object.” Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 526.

<sup>351</sup> “Nevertheless, the first apprehension has worth and carries some degree of pleasure. Do we not see it in the poetical compositions? Every age, sex, and class of people feel the pleasure of the fairytales and the fascination of the stage.” Ibid. 527.

lacking judgment and reflection, and resembling pure intuition, which Benedetto Croce would define as “unità indifferenziata del reale e della semplice imagine del possibile” (“undifferentiated unity of the real and the mere image of the possible.”)<sup>352</sup> In Pallavicino’s notion of artistic intuition there is no dialectical relationship between the subject-observer and object-artifact, nor any passing of judgment on the truthfulness of the work of art. While it is arguable that knowledge can happen without judgment, it is important to underline that Sforza Pallavicino is rescuing the arts, specifically theatre, as a medium for the transmission of knowledge. That this knowledge might be limited and flawed does not concern him at all.

Propongansi questo partito a ciascuno di noi: o di conoscere tutte le cose con errore, o di non conoscere nulla ma viver sepolto in perpetuo sonno. Qual condizione eleggeremmo? Io certo la prima, e crederei che tutti in ciò mi sarebber compagni; adunque l’errore è più vantaggioso della mera mancanza dell’errore.<sup>353</sup>

In spite of some opposition to the use of theatre within the Society of Jesus, Pallavicino rationalizes the relevance of stage performances as a form of knowledge able to benefit both students and audiences. The fictionality of stage representations confines theatre to a lower level in the hierarchy of epistemological media, but Pallavicino has no doubts about its effectiveness. Naturally, in order to be fit for the Jesuit college, theatre needed to conform to specific and rigid rules curtailing its potential dangers. Only moral and religious attributions could save theatre from moral damnation. The 1586 *Ratio Studiorum*, and its later 1591 and 1599 editions, tolerated stage representations as long as the dramatists wrote in Latin, dealt with religious topics, and did

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<sup>352</sup> Benedetto Croce, *Estetica* (Bari: Laterza, 1922) cited in L. Volpe, 11.

<sup>353</sup> “Let’s suppose that each one of us would be faced by this choice: either know everything with mistakes or not know anything and live buried in a deep sleep. What decision would we make? I would surely choose the first and I believe everybody would agree with me because the error would be more advantageous of the mere lack of error.” Sforza Pallavicino, *Del Bene*, 525.

not include female characters.<sup>354</sup> The requisite to write in Latin was motivated by the necessity for the students to practice this universal language so to bridge the separations caused by national idioms, however the urgency to reach the greatest number of people and that of evangelizing the ethnical populations living in the colonies had led to the loosening of that prohibition. Pallavicino's use of vernacular Italian reflected in this sense the general trend of seventeenth century Jesuit theatre.

What Pallavicino cannot and does not want to change is the ban on all actresses, and the limitation of female characters, which inevitably forced male students to portray women. While the Rule 13 of the 1599 edition of the *Ratio studiorum* had reinforced the exclusion of female characters from the stage, the Jesuits soon softened this prohibition and Society of Jesus General Aquaviva allowed in 1600 French Jesuits to introduce sparingly female characters.<sup>355</sup> The emphasis shifted from the presence of female characters to their moral qualities: Nicolas Caussin defended his drama *Felicitas* by stating that it employed a "mulierem fortem" ("a strong woman")<sup>356</sup>, and Silvio Antoniano reckoned that plays should be performed only by men and that all female characters should be eliminated except those of old and exemplarily behaved women.<sup>357</sup> While later editions of the *Ratio Studiorum* forbade cross-dressing, they allowed male actors to play female roles while wearing male clothing. Pallavicino felt the need to justify the incongruous fact of a male student playing Ingonda by giving the audience a believable dramaturgical explanation for the contrivance: Ermenegildo's wife acts and looks masculine because she is pretending to be a boy. The author strongly feels the necessity to validate the

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<sup>354</sup> "Tragoediarum et Comoediarum, quas non nisi latinas acrarissima oportet, argumentum sacrum sit ac pium: neque quidquam actibus interponatur, quod non latinum sit ac decorum: neque persona ulla muliebris vel habitus introducatur." *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*, 1159-1160.

<sup>355</sup> William H. McCabe, 180.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 183

<sup>357</sup> G. B. Castiglione, *Sentimenti di Carlo Borromeo intorno agli spettacoli* (Bergamo: Lancellotti, 1759).

absence of a feminine Ingonda because she is a pivotal character in the play. He articulates cleverly the apparently far-fetched plotline of having a man pretending to be a woman pretending to be a man by having the other characters explain the reasons for the change in her looks. They trace the reason in the privations she suffered while away from the court, in the darker color of her skin, which she gained from exposure to the sun on her journey back to Seville, and in the fact that she aged from the sorrow due to the death of her child. William H. McCabe takes issue with Pallavicino's choice to have Ingonda dressed in male clothing and calls it a "hardly admirable evasion of the letter as well as of the spirit of the legislation which forbade female roles or dress on the Jesuit stage."<sup>358</sup> He also hypothesizes that Italy might have been dispensed in 1644 from the prohibition of having female characters on stage, as it had happened earlier on in France and Germany, which, McCabe argues, makes Pallavicino's dramaturgical choice difficult to understand. I think the motivations of the dramatist might have been more complex than McCabe acknowledges. Pallavicino states that his resolution of having Ingonda pretending to be a man came from the prohibition of having a male student dressed as a woman:

Oltre a ciò, perché le domestiche leggi della sua religione gli vietano l'indurre in palco veruna donna con abito femmineo, ha egli ordito il nodo in maniera che paresse arte di elezione, quel ch'era necessità di proibizione.  
<sup>359</sup>

What appears to concern Pallavicino is not simply the realistic portrayal of Ingonda and the believability of the plotline, which demands that Ermenegildo not recognize his wife and perceive in the ring a symbol of her betrayal. The characterization of Ingonda betrays the

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<sup>358</sup> McCabe, 183.

<sup>359</sup> "Besides that, as the rules of his order forbade him from introducing female characters with female clothes, the author has structured the plot in such a way that appeared to be a choice what was in reality a prohibition.") Sforza Pallavicino, *Ermenegildo martire*, 163.

dramatist's embarrassment for having a boy playing a woman in love. By making sure that the only female character dresses and acts like a man, he avoids the risk of feminizing the male student playing Ingonda, and defuses the dreaded threat of sexual ambiguity incited by a young student pretending to be, or 'acting as,' a woman. Gualtiero Gnerchi sees in the exclusion of female characters from the stage the Jesuit's obsession with homoerotic desire, and its attempt to "spiritualizzare gli ardori grecizzanti, tanto facili a nascere fra collegiali o fra condannati al celibato."<sup>360</sup> It might be for this reason that Pallavicino masculinizes Ingonda by dressing her in boys' clothes, and spiritualizes her love for Ermenegildo so that the relationship between the two is not that between a man and woman, but that of a saint to his spiritual guide. Scene III of act II clarifies this point by addressing both Ingonda's rejection of the attractions of the body as transient, and her conception of the soul as carrying true and eternal beauty.

Certo io non crederò, che fra due cori  
 Tanta amistà pioverer mai le stelle,  
 Quanta fra'l cor d'Ermenegildo e il mio  
 Concordi in tutto, ed in ciò sol discordi,  
 Che ciascun l'altro amò più che se stesso.  
 Ma più saggia di lui  
 In tal discordia io fui,  
 Perch'amai più quel ch'è d'amor più degno;  
 E tanto l'amor suo mi fu più grato,  
 Perch'amò me, non questa fragil veste,  
 che non è me ma sol di me l'immagine.  
 Non fu me quella chioma,  
 Che di raggi di sol chiamò tessuta  
 Il forsennato volgo:  
 Ecco che l'ho troncata eppur son'io.

L'alma sola è me stessa: e de l'affetto  
 Del mio dolce consorte ella fu segno:  
 Ella che reterà dappoi che gli anni  
 Tingeranno il mio crin di vile argento,

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<sup>360</sup> "... spiritualize the Grecian ardors that were easy to kindle among college students or people doomed to celibacy." Gualtiero Gnerchi, *Il teatro dei Gesuiti nei suoi primordi a Roma* (Rome: Officina Poligrafica, 1907).

E di rughe areranno il magro volto;  
E da poi che la morte in fossa oscura,  
Farà di questo vel cenere, e vermi;  
E questo solo amor dura immortale,  
Perch'ama l'immortale.<sup>361</sup>

While Lope de Vega presented Ingonda and Ermenegildo as husband and wife sharing a concrete and physical love, Pallavicino transforms the couple's relationship into a spiritual bond that discards the body and longs for the soul. Ermenegildo echoes the words of his wife in underlining the purity of their relationship: "Coei la cui virtù sublime / per me del cielo è la viva imago / e che del ciel a me portò la luce." A few pages later, he again stresses the role of Ingonda as a vehicle to reach God, "Restò nell'alma un solo affetto / che di celeste a me sembrava misto / mentre amava io coei, da la cui mano / venni guidato a Cristo."<sup>362</sup>

By physically stripping her of her femininity and confining her to male attire, Pallavicino distances Ingonda from the threats of sexual love, and shapes her as a Virgin Mary figure whose function is to spiritually nurture souls and guide them to God. Ingonda, just like Mary, represents the obedient, loving, and charitable construction of the 'perfected' woman, who was able to accommodate the misogyny of the Church while providing an example for all women. Donna Spivey Ellington sees in the Counter-Reformation the historical moment when the image of Mary changes from that of immaculate body to that of angelic soul, thus expanding the role traditionally assigned to her as mother.

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<sup>361</sup> "I don't believe that there has ever been such friendship such as the one between my heart and Ermenegildo's. Our hearts are always in agreement except on the issue of who loves the other the most. In this disagreement, I was wiser because I loved what is more worth loving. His love was even more welcomed because he loved me, not this fragile appearance that is not me but merely an image of me. My hair, which people claimed was knitted with sunbeams, was not me. I cut it and I am still myself. ... Only the soul is the same and it was a sign of the affection of my husband. The soul will stay after the years would have dyed my hair of unattractive silver, and the wrinkles would have plowed my thin face, and death would have turned me in ashes and worms in the dark tomb. Only this love lasts forever, because it is a love the loves the immortal." Sforza Pallavicino, *Ermenegildo martire*, 44-45.

<sup>362</sup> "She, whose sublime virtue is the true image of heaven, brought to me the light of heaven ....It remained in the soul only one human affection that seemed celestial to while I loved the woman whose hand led me to Christ." *Ibid.*, 49, 55.

Before Mary was able to conceive Christ bodily, she had become his spiritual mother through faith and the willingness to do God's will; this spiritual motherhood was dearer to her son than ever her physical conception of him .... While none but the Virgin herself could claim the perfection of an Immaculate Conception, all could receive God's grace in the sacraments and strive to follow in her footsteps as virtuous, spiritual mothers of Jesus.<sup>363</sup>

In *Ermenegildo martire*, Ingonda mirrors Mary and Ermenegildo analogizes Christ, therefore their union takes on the values of the relationship between a mother and her son. Ingonda 'delivers' Ermenegildo to his new life when she converts him to Catholicism, thus making him born again. Furthermore, she 'delivers' him one more time to his celestial destiny, when she delays the messenger with Leovigildo's commutation of the death penalty, thus unknowingly causing his execution.

As discussed in chapter 2, the willingness of Ermenegildo to die for his faith is also crucial to the Society of Jesus' ideology, which perceived in martyrdom the defense of the Catholicism and the setting of an example for the faithful. Pallavicino fully uses the image of the body as the prison of the soul in the monologue delivered by the gatekeeper. Here he welcomes death as a present delivering him to his celestial kingdom, and he claims that his blood is the currency that buys the salvation of others and leads Spain to the true faith.<sup>364</sup> Ermenegildo

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<sup>363</sup> Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington, D.C.: The catholic University of America Press, 2001), 186-187.

<sup>364</sup> "Amici, io non da voi danno, e offesa, / Anzi la vera libert  ricevo: / Che non dai muri sol di questa torre, / Ma dal carcere pi  stretto e pi  penoso / Mi fate uscir, con l'impennarmi l'ali, / Ond'io voli a regnar sopra le stelle ... S  giovevole offesa io vi perdono. / Anzi prego quell Dio, che col suo sangue / La salute compr  di chi lo sparse, / Ch'oggi il mio sangue, a chi lo sparge impetri / I rai de la salute, e quella fede, / In cui difesa di versarlo io godo. / O ben tre volte avventurato sangue, / S'a l'errante reina, al padre mio, / Et al caro german gli occhi risana, e fa veder il sol del Paradiso, / Ch'Oriente a l'Esperia aprir si degni. " ("Friends, I do not receive from you any damage or offence but the real freedom. Not only do you free me from the walls of this tower but also from the smallest and most miserable prison, that of the soul, so that I fly away to govern over the stars ... I forgive you such pleasurable offence. As a matter of fact, I pray to God, who bought with his own blood the one who now offer their lives in martyrdom, that my blood may bring the rays of health and the faith for which I am happy to offer it. My blood will

equates the power of his sacrifice to that of Christ by associating his death with the conversion of his family. He highlights the transformative and regenerative power associated with blood shedding, which is one of the trademarks of Jesuit tragedy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Comforting Ingonda, Leandro describes in detail the splendor of Ermenegildo's transfiguration into sainthood, exploiting wholly the repertoire of baroque literary *conceptismo*. Images of precious stones, similes, metaphors, synecdoche, etc, display the blessings that follow his martyrdom and portray it as an action worth imitating.<sup>365</sup>

The prison, as the main locale of the tragedy, enhances the atmosphere of devotion that permeates the entire plot. Ermenegildo is already in captivity when the play starts and this immediately propels the audience into the chosen destiny of the Christian hero. Moreover, it gives the dramatist the chance to stage a stark separation between the horrors of the tower and the magnificent description of the saint's ascent to heaven. Two of the recurrent images in the play are the transient nature of life, which can change quickly from good to bad, and the sense of purpose and direction that comes from following God's call. Besides his doubt of Ingonda's loyalty in act II, Ermenegildo is always calm and collected. He is conscious of the value of his sacrifice and decided to give his life for the glory of God and the salvation of his family and country. There is no doubt in his mind that his worth is directly proportional to the magnitude of his sacrifice and he is ready to make it. Unlike Tesauro's Ermegildo, who initially refuses to be

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be three times fortunate if it heals the eyes of the queen , my father and my brother so that they may see the sun of heaven opening from the east to the west.") Sforza Pallavicino, *Ermenegildo martire*, 121-122.

<sup>365</sup> "Cerulea nube tempestata d'oro / De l'alma pari al sol era la vesta: / Tolti all'aurora i crini havea la testa / Incoronata d'immortale alloro; / Alloro che smaltato era in vermiglio / Da gocciole d'ogn'ostro assai più belle: / Per gemme il seno havea croce di stelle: / Splendea letizia e maestà nel ciglio: / Spirava intorno odor così gentile, / Come d'Ambrocio il più fiorito Aprile. Eran rubini e perle i labri ardenti, / Onde uscì l'armonia di questi accenti." ("His garment was a cerulean cloud studded of gold comparable to the sun. His head like the hair of the dawn was crowned with immortal laurel, enameled in red drops that were more beautiful than all other colors. His chest presented a cross of stars as precious stones, and one could see majesty and happiness in his eyes. All around him there was the gentle scent of ambrosia one can smell in the most flowery April. His lips were rubies and pearls from which the harmony of these words came out.") Ibid., 131.



judged by the popular tribunal and attempts to prove, although unsuccessfully, his innocence, Pallavicino's hero seeks his martyrdom as the very proof of his innocence and the moment legitimizing his faith in God.

The play draws on the theory of regicide only tangentially because of the diplomatic position that the Collegio Romano held as the most important Jesuit institution in Rome. A statement in favor of the legitimate act of murdering a king from a Jesuit college in Rome would have been difficult to defend and would have brought embarrassing attention to the relationship between the Vatican and the Society of Jesus. Although *Ermenegildo martire* downplays the relevance of regicide by portraying Ermenegildo already defeated and in prison, it does not completely disregard the topic. The theme of a prince revolting against his father is inscribed in the historical insurrection of Hermenegildo against Leovigildo, therefore the play automatically carries that significance whether or not the dramatist intends to highlight it. Given that the character was popular for being recently sanctified and for the numerous stage representations of his martyrdom, it is reasonable to say that the main tenets of the saint's story were clear to the majority of people. Pallavicino decides to curtail the impact of regicide by relating the war between Hermenegildo and Leovigildo only briefly in act I, where he explains that Ermenegildo left the court and retired to Seville after the queen tried to baptize Ingonda, and that his father declared war against him for fear that he would ally with the Catholic Byzantines. For the entire five acts, Ermenegildo is portrayed as a prisoner of war, not as a murderous patricide.

While Pallavicino represents Ermenegildo as the innocent victim of aggression, his portrayal of Leovigildo is quintessentially that of a tyrant. The king's desire for power makes him suspicious, reckless, and ultimately causes him to destroy his own son. While Tesauo's Leovigildo is forced by law to condemn Ermegildo, and tries until the very end to save his life,

Pallavicino casts Leovigildo as a devilish character whose only preoccupation is that of being dethroned. His reaction at the death of his own grandson is exemplary of his inhuman monstrosity

Quantunque un vel di simulata doglia  
Si stendesse brev'ora il Re su'l volto,  
Finché il gallico messo ebbe presente,  
Tosto squarciato poi cadde quel velo  
Dai raggi che vibrò la gioia interna:  
Infaustissimi raggi, onde raccesso  
Fu de lo sdegno il già sopito foco.<sup>366</sup>

The king welcomes the news of his grandson's death with joy because it frees him of his worries over a war with France for the hereditary right to the throne. As a true tyrant, Leovigildo disregards the value of life, rules over his subjects with an iron fist, and shows no tolerance towards other people's ideas. Even though Pallavicino minimizes the threat posed by regicide, he depicts Leovigildo as a tyrannous individual who should, and will be, replaced by Recaredo, a more morally fit king because he would have embraced the Catholic faith.

#### **4.3.4 *Ermenegildo* as a modern and normalizing tragedy**

In *Ermenegildo martire* Pallavicino aspires to normalize the Jesuit tragedy, therefore he limits the spectacular effects, reduces the number of characters and scenes, abolishes all aspects of the tragedy that were artificial and contravened decorum and verisimilitude, such as soliloquies,

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<sup>366</sup> "Even though a veil of faked sorrow spread briefly over the king's face when the French messenger was present, soon that veil fell being torn apart by the rays reverberating from his internal joy: unfortunate rays where one could see again the rekindled fire of his hatred." Ibid., 90.

prologues, and messengers, applies the pseudo-Aristotelian unities to provide structure and consistency, and eliminates all allegorical figures. Francesco Colagrosso underlines the normative aspects of the play in relationship to the quite overtly visual character of Jesuit theatre in general.

L'*Ermenegildo* dello Sforza Pallavicino, rappresentato in Roma verso la metà del Seicento da' giovani del Seminario, ha nella storia del teatro gesuitico italiano una particolare importanza, perchè tra l'imperversare di tragedie e tragicommedie, riboccanti di scene spettacolose e svolgentisi senza unità di tempo e di luogo, è un tentativo di dramma regolare.<sup>367</sup>

Colagrosso alludes of course to the many Jesuit tragedies staged purely for their religious content but without any ulterior artistic purpose. Sforza Pallavicino wanted to impose a more essential spirituality upon Jesuit theatre by keeping its message simple and direct. He appears to feel uneasiness towards lavish productions based on visual effects, because in his opinion they thwarted the religious message of the story instead of advancing it. He eliminated from his tragedy every trace of spectacle, even the execution of the hero which is simply related by the warder, as well as his final transfiguration in the last scene of act V. Instead of staging the resurrection and assumption in heaven of the saint, Pallavicino has Leandro recount the event for Ingonda.<sup>368</sup> He believed that the form best suited to the content of the Jesuit college theatre should be different from the extravagant spectacle of both religious and lay theatre, therefore simplicity in the staging is his driving dramaturgical criterion. In what might sound like an apology, Pallavicino explained his resolution in the discourse that ends the published text: "Egli

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<sup>367</sup> "Sforza Pallavicino's *Ermenegildo*, staged in Rome around the mid 1600s by the students of the college, holds a particular significance in the history of Jesuit theatre, because in the midst of tragedies and tragicomedies overflowing with spectacular scenes and without unities of time and place, it represents an attempt at creating regular drama." Francesco Colagrosso, *Saverio Bettinelli e il teatro gesuitico* (Florence: Sansoni, 1901), ix.

<sup>368</sup> Jesuit dramatist Federico della Valla uses the same dramaturgical strategy in his *La Reina di Scozia*, certainly one of the best examples of martyr tragedy in Italy. In this case the death of Queen Mary Stuart is narrated by a witness, who was present at the execution.

nel comporla studiosi che se l'opera doveva riuscire povera di bellezze, fosse almeno modesta nelle licenze."<sup>369</sup> The author showed an understanding of the tragic form that already foreshadows the literary sensibility of the eighteenth century. He blames the use of unnecessary spectacle as both superfluous in narrating the story and indicative of the poor taste of the writers, who "amano comperare con l'abbondanza dell'oro la pubblica ricreazione del popolo eziandio meno erudito, e meno attento."<sup>370</sup> In Pallavicino's opinion, the excessive theatrical spectacle is the byproduct of the intellectual laziness of the dramatists who feed into the questionable taste of the common people. He allowed the spectacle during the *intermezzi*, and in the tragedy when they were supported by the story and justified by the plotline.

Né quindi si toglie, che o nei tramezzi, o in altra maniera non possa dilettarsi con meraviglia la vista, quando in ciò non vogliono perdonare alla fatica, ed alla spesa coloro che rappresentano la tragedia. Anzi nel corpo medesimo dell'azione non sarà disdetto l'introdurre aprimenti di palazzi, di giardini (e ancora di Cielo e d'Inferno, quando siamo in que' casi dove sia lecito introdurre i miracoli) e simiglianti nuove apparenze; le quali non contengono quella inverisimil maniera di movimento nei risguardanti, che habbiamo accennata...<sup>371</sup>

I would also argue that Pallavicino saw in unjustified, sheer spectacle one of the main traits of professional theatre, opera, and *comedia dell'arte*, the very entertainments from which Jesuit theatre wanted to steal away the audience. For the author a tragedy without spectacle and female performers was then an alternative to the excesses and profanity offered during these secular representations. That Jesuit dramatists thought of college plays as an antidote to

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<sup>369</sup> "He resolved that if his work had to be poor of beauty, it was at least modest in licenses." Sforza Pallavicino, *Ermengildo martire*, 114.

<sup>370</sup> "... [they] love to buy with abundant gold the public entertainment of less educated and attentive people." Ibid, 137.

<sup>371</sup> "Therefore, it is allowed to pleasure the sight with marvel during the *intermezzi* or in other ways, if the organizers accept the additional work and expenses. It is acceptable to introduce in the middle of the action the opening of palaces, gardens, as well as Heaven and Hell (in cases where it is acceptable to address miracles) and other similar displays which do not defy verisimilitude, as I have explained earlier..." Ibid, 136-137.

professional theatre is clear also by the times of the year in which they staged their plays. It is not surprising that most Jesuit college productions, including the original 1644 production of *Ermenegildo martire*, happened during the Carnival season, the time of the year when attendance at secular theatre peaked. While these secular plays and operas played to an uneducated crowd that wanted to be amazed by scenic effects, the unspectacular theatre of Sforza Pallavicino aspired to educate by providing the public with strong and exemplary characters to emulate. In the dedication to his good friend Cardinal Francesco Barberini, the author returned to the topic of the true function of the tragic genre, which he identifies in the fortification of honesty and morality in the audience.<sup>372</sup> By eliminating spectacle in his tragedy, Pallavicino thought he was avoiding incurring the artistic and moral errors of secular dramatists, as well as of some Jesuit dramatists who indulged in visual stimuli.

Pallavicino believes that the plot, or dramaturgical scaffolding of the tragedy, was the foundation on which the success of the tragedy should rely. His disdain for *deus ex machina* characters, personifications of moral and allegorical qualities, supernatural events, and asides, choruses and messengers as devices to provide information, fully represents his belief that the dramatist should build dramatic action on detailed and verisimilar situations.<sup>373</sup> According to

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<sup>372</sup> “...il soggetto istesso dell’opera è dovuto a lei per due capi. Il primo è per havere il suo santissimo zio accresciuti gli onori di questo santo con le chiavi di Pietro, e celebrate le sue lodi sull’arpa di David. Il secondo è, perché Vostra Eminenza ben consapevole di quel gran documento platonico commentato da Aristotele, che la prima cura de’ governanti vuol essere l’avvezzare i popoli a dilettersi dell’onesto, ha spesso con magnifica santità consagrate la pompa, e la dilettazion delle scene alla povertà, ed alla sofferenza eroica de’ santi. E così V.E. .... ha voluto pascere il mondo con facelle nudrite di puro, e non immondo liquore.” (“...the very subject of the tragedy is due to Our Eminence for two reasons. The first is that you holy uncle has raised the honors of this saint with the key of Peter, and he has celebrated his praises on the harp of David. The second reason is that Our Eminence, aware of that platonico document Aristotle commented that discusses how the first concern of the rulers is to teach people to take pleasure in honest activities, often used with magnificent sanctity the lavishness and entertainments of the stage for the poverty and heroic sufferings of the saints. By doing this, Your Eminence ... expressed his desire to nourish the world with words full of pure and not foul liquor.”) Ibid, 7.

<sup>373</sup> The choruses in *Ermenegildo martire* are lyrical commentaries to what happen in each act finale. They are the author’s pensive and moral reflection on the stories of the play, and never give information about past or future events. Their titles are “Giovamenti dell Concordia,” “Nocumenti del Sospetto,” “Beni della Speranza,” and “Mali che apporta l’avidità di regnare.”

Pallavicino, it is the interrelatedness and sensible juxtaposition of the scenes that shape the dramatic world. The different narrative planes of *Ermenegildo martire* work together to lead to Ermenegildo's ultimate sacrifice. The dramatic irony of Ingonda's disguise as a boy resides in the fact that she unknowingly triggers both Ermenegildo's jealousy and Leovigildo's suspicions of Ermenegildo's secret alliance with the French. Furthermore, her wanting to protect Ermenegildo by delaying the delivery of the message to the tower, which is perfectly justified by her knowledge of Leovigildo's resolution, proves fatal because the king has pardoned his son. All the characters have only partial understanding of the truth and that is what pushes the dramatic action further. With the exception of the protagonist, they all fail to see the divine design for Ermenegildo's martyrdom.

Due to the fact that his tragedy was built upon interdependent plot lines and a studied sequentiality of the scenes, Pallavicino recommended to whoever intended to present it in the future not to change anything because “avverrebbe come tal'ora negli edifici; cioè che quello che a primo aspetto sembrava ornamento, quando poi si leva, faccia con danno conoscere, che era sostegno.”<sup>374</sup>

There is a profound interest for the modalities of expression and structure of tragedy in the attempt to conjugate verisimilitude and *meraviglia*, the Baroque attribute that aspires to stupefy and surprise the public. Pallavicino tackles the relationship between these two qualities, which he thinks attainable and essential for the tragic genre, in the “Discorso” preceding the tragedy. In clear opposition to the taste of Marino and his followers, he suggests looking at classical writers to see how verisimilitude can convey a feeling of marvel. Unlike the baroque writers of the time who thought that precious style could make the reader forget about any

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<sup>374</sup> “... it would happen what happens sometimes to buildings: that what apparently looked like ornament, when it is removed, it shows with great damage that it was a pillar.” *Ibid.*, 164.

violation of verisimilitude, Pallavicino affirms that classic decorum and good taste, the very foundation of verisimilitude, can convey the feeling of marvel to the public. He mentions Giovanni Boccaccio as an exemplary writer in achieving marvel through verisimilar storylines, in spite of the fact that he was reproachable for the licentiousness of his plots. In defending his notion of verisimilitude over the poetic excessiveness of his contemporaries, Pallavicino considers any deviance from verisimilar circumstances as trivial, common, and laughable.<sup>375</sup> He aspires to a *meraviglioso regolare* in which marvel is born out of an exceptional, yet verisimilar circumstance that the audience failed to foresee. The stylistic and narrative strategies Pallavicino uses in *Ermenegildo martire* he borrows from the artistic tenets of the newly born novelistic form, which adopted intricate plots, and was often based on disguises, misunderstanding, and surprising recognitions.<sup>376</sup>

While Pallavicino rejected spectacle as a trivial strategy to move the audience, he is not against the use of an ornate poetic style to procure a sense of *meraviglia* in the readers. Once more he recommends that the use of unusual words, metaphorical and elaborate style, and lavishly ornate images should be always framed by the law of necessity and simplicity. In *Considerazioni sopra l'arte dello stile e del dialogo*, published in 1646, two years after the staging of *Ermenegildo martire*, the author explains the value and function of literary embellishments by turning to Lucretius' tale of the honey sprinkled on the edge of a jar of medicine as a trick to get children to take their bitter but necessary drugs. It is a long passage but it is poignant and relevant in explaining the recurrent tenets of Pallavicino's literary and

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<sup>375</sup> "...il mirabile non verisimile né ha difficoltà in ritrovarsi, né reca piacere, se non forse di riso in udirsi, né merita il nome di poesia, perché non è imitazione del vero: là dove il verisimile, benché non ammirabile, ha tutte queste prerogative." ("The marvelous that is not verisimilar is of a common nature, and it is not pleasurable except for being laughable, because it does not imitate the truth. On the other hand, the verisimilitude has all these qualities in spite of the fact that is not admirable." Ibid., 151.

<sup>376</sup> Franco Croce, *Tre momenti del Barocco letterario italiano* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1966), 167.

theatrical ideas, especially his clear understanding of moderation in restraining both theatre's spectacle and poetical and linguistic excessiveness.

I do not want this sweetness to be so infected that it corrupts the power of the medicine, a defect from which the great man who transported this comparison into our language perhaps was not entirely innocent. I object also to a sweet that takes away the original taste of the doctrine, because the intellect should be defended from every fraud and not run the risk of being cheated into drinking wine with tannin, delightful to the taste but harmful to the stomach. For this reason, and with the same simile, Aristotle warns us that an overtly florid manner of speaking is not as good for an orator as his listeners might suspect [...] I want the sweet to be like sugar in foods, which improve but does not change other flavors. In addition, I want this same sugar, however innocent and savory it may be, spread over the didactic style with a tight fist, according to the precepts of the great masters [...]<sup>377</sup>

The author also responds to the detractors who might have said that the use of patterned rhymes was not verisimilar because people do not speak in verse in real life. Once again, he follows on the footsteps of the literary predecessors who convinced him, because of their fame and achievements, to “prendere il peso di tanto grave catena” (“to carry the weight of such heavy chain.”) Pallavicino cites Sperone Speroni who had used the rhyme in his *Canace*, and writers such as Gustavo Rinuccini, Gabriello Chiabrera, and Giulio Rospigliosi. Quoting Ludovico Castelvetro, Pallavicino defends his choice by saying that Italian poetry had never been rhyme-free until Gian Giorgio Trissino popularized it in the 1500s. To further demonstrate the positive contribution of the rhyming verse, the author asserts that rhyme “porge diletto alle orecchie, meraviglia all’intelletto, ed aiuto alla memoria.”<sup>378</sup> Addressing the people who thought the

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<sup>377</sup> Brendan Dooley, ed. and trans. *Italy in the Baroque: Selected Readings* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), 488.

<sup>378</sup> “It is a pleasure to the ears, a marvel to the intellect, and an aid to memory.” Pallavicino, *Ermenegildo martire*, 159.



rhyme too artificial to ‘appear’ true, Pallavicino argues that verisimilitude is still possible when the writer makes the rhyme sound necessary and indispensable:

(...) siccome abbiamo detto, che nelle favole il poeta rende verisimili per le circostanze i successi meravigliosi, che di lor natura sarebben inverisimili; così l’industria del poeta rende verisimile a primo aspetto la favella meravigliosa, che per la sua natura sarebbe inverisimile ... o questa verisimilitudine a primo aspetto si consegue nella favella misurata dei versi, quand’eglino son formati con tal franchezza, che il numero paia effetto del caso; cioè, come se il favellatore non ad altro mirando, che ad esprimere bene il suo pensiero, si affronti a caso in parole tali, onde insieme risulti e l’acconcia, e la misurata espressione ... purché la rima sia tratta da parole sì necessarie, o sì opportune, che paiano usate ad ogni altro fine, che di rimare. E questa naturalezza tanto più si consegue, mentre le rime si inseriscono senza uniformità, e con gran licenza ... come ha fatto l’autore.”<sup>379</sup>

The rhyme is acceptable when the skilful writer disguises its contrived and artificial nature with verses that appear natural and organic in the context in which they are used. With this, Pallavicino clearly distances himself from Baroque poets such as Marino, who saw in the rhyme another way to marvel the public with artificiality and redundancy.

Pallavicino occupies a role of primary importance in the aesthetical debate of the seventeenth century for his theorizing about the epistemological role of the arts and striving to reform Italian theatre in order to elevate it to the position of other European stage traditions.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> “Just as I argued earlier that the poet makes marvelous events, that are inherently unbelievable, appear verisimilar by using contextualizing circumstances, in the same way the poet also makes verisimilar the marvelous language that is in its nature not verisimilar ... This verisimilitude is constructed with measured verses, when they are formed with such deliberateness that their number appears almost casually, as if the speaker found the words by chance while trying to express his ideas, so that the result is a proper and careful expression ... as long as the rhyme comes out of words so necessary and appropriate that they appear to fulfill any other need but rhyming. It is easier to achieve this natural effect when rhymes are not used consistently but with great freedom ... as the author has done.” Ibid., 159-160.

<sup>380</sup> The centrality of Pallavicino to the aesthetical debates of the seventeenth century has been underlined by all the scholars who have studied his work. Among the many, it is worth mentioning Giovanni Alfredo Cesareo, *Storia delle teorie estetiche in Italia* (Bologna, 1924); Ciro Trabalza, *La critica letteraria* (Milan: Vallardi Editore, 1915); Franco Croce, *Tre momenti del barocco letterario italiano* (Florence: Sansoni, 1966); Giuseppe Toffanin, *L’eredità del Rinascimento in Arcadia* (Bologna, 1923).

He aspires to a systematic reorganization of Italian theatre according to rules of verisimilitude and decorum. Thus, he moves away both from any isolated attempt of literary change as well as from the poetic excessiveness of Giovan Battista Marino's followers.<sup>381</sup> While his efforts to bring about the desired innovations are worth praising, it is also undeniable that Pallavicino ultimately fails to achieve true literary changes. His denunciation of the cultural and moral poverty of Italian literary and theatrical traditions never moves to seek immediate solutions because, as Franco Croce maintains, Pallavicino is incapable of embracing "un nuovo mondo di pensieri e di sentimenti." ("a new world of thoughts and sentiments.")<sup>382</sup> In spite of his claims for renewal, Pallavicino preempts his ideological positions by embracing Aristotelism, which he variously interprets but from which he never distances himself. In a letter dated October 27, 1646, Pallavicino claims to disapprove those who pedantically follow Aristotle's rules without ever questioning them.<sup>383</sup> However, the "Discorso" placed as appendix to *Ermenegildo martire* is merely his attempt to defend his choices on the bases of Aristotle's *Poetics*. He uses the commentaries of the *Poetics* written by Renaissance writers to defend his tragedies from the accusations of not being a tragedy because of its happy ending, its innocent protagonist and its lack of *peripeteia*, or change of fortune. The only times Pallavicino moves away from these

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<sup>381</sup> The literary impact of Marino on Italian literature of the seventeenth century can hardly be overstated. His style became fashionable and spurred hordes of imitators who only occasionally reached the sophistication of their model. Eugenio Donato describes Marino's work "as the highly metaphorical expression of highly sensual material –each of these terms being carried to such an extreme as to leave no doubt about its being treated as an end in itself. The poet never really attempted to explain the theoretical implications of his poetical aims." Eugenio Donato, "Tesaurus's Poetics: Through the Looking Glass" *MLN*, Vol. 78, No. 1, Italian Issue. (Jan., 1963), 15.

<sup>382</sup> Franco Croce, 163.

<sup>383</sup> "Ed ho ripreso coloro come schiavi poco onorevoli di Aristotele, che apprezzano i detti suoi per la fama dell'autore, e non più tosto l'autore per la fama dei suoi detti ... Anzi soglio dire che più conosce il merito di Aristotele chi tal'ora il rifiuta, che chi per tutto lo segue ... Io siccome disprezzo per ignoranti i dispregiatori di Aristotele, così riverisco per sapienti coloro, che conoscendo l'eccellenza della sua dottrina, sanno anche farsi giudici né temerari, né pusillanimità de' suoi errori." ("I have reproached as dishonorable slaves of Aristotle those who appreciate his words for the notoriety of the man instead of appreciating the man for the notoriety of his words ... I want to say that the person who sometimes rejects Aristotle knows him more than the person who follows him in everything ... As I reckon ignorant those who despise Aristotle, by the same token I revere as wise those who, knowing the excellence of his doctrine can be sensible and daring judges of his mistakes.") This *Lettera del 27 Ottobre 1646* is contained in the manuscript 2121 at the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome, Italy.

sources is when he misreads and misinterprets them, but those are seldom conscious choices. The author respects the pseudo-Aristotelian rules of place, time and action. The only two locales of the tragedy, the prison and the court, are both in the city of Seville and easily reachable because they are close to one another. The tragedy starts with Ermenegildo already being held in prison, therefore the time in the play elapses almost in unison with the time of the representation, which was about four hours long. Ultimately, the play does not have subplots, thus it displays the clarity and linearity that Pallavicino deemed necessary for a verisimilar and decorous tragedy.

While Pallavicino's efforts to normalize the tragedy aimed at establishing the dramatic genre as a dignified and morally appropriate medium of religious education and entertainment, they also aspired to homogenize the creativity and artistic spontaneity found in other Jesuit dramatists. Daniela Quarta identifies Pallavicino's artistic goals as responsible for the enormous influence Jesuit theatre had on the theatre of the seventeenth century in Italy, but she also blames the strict dramaturgical rules and adherence to the pseudo-Aristotelian model as the cause that "vanificherà tratti originali e autonomi di interpretazione e creazione di un'idea di teatro composita e diversa, che era stata alla base dei successi del Tucci, del Benci e dello Stefonio."<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> "It will nullify both the original and autonomous traits of interpretation and the creation of a composite and diverse theatre that had sustained the successes of Tucci, Benci, and Stefonio." Daniela Quarta, "Drammaturgia gesuita nel Collegio Romano: dalla tragedia di soggetto biblico al drama martiriologico (1560-1644), in *I Gesuiti e i Primordi del Teatro Barocco in Europa*, 160.

## 5.0 HERMENEGILDO IN MEXICO

### 5.1 SOR JUANA'S INÉS DE LA CRUZ' *EL MÁRTIR DEL SACRAMENTO*, *HERMENEGILDO*

The first chapter situated the story of Saint Hermenegildo at the very heart of Catholicism by showing how the martyr became a trope of religious significance in Jesuitical colleges during the Counter Reformation. The numerous theatrical versions celebrating the life and martyrdom of the saint helped the Jesuits in commemorating the foundation of Catholic Spain, reactivated knowledge of biblical stories, encouraged the defense of Catholic doctrine against the Lutheran Reformation, encouraged missionary work and, finally, legitimated the crime of regicide when it was committed against a tyrant. In chapter II, the analysis of the Jesuit play *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* and Lope de Vega's *La mayor corona* led to a discussion about the similarities and differences existing between the theory and practice of Jesuit college theatre and secular religious theatre in Golden Age Spain. It also addressed how the popularity of the Hermenegildo trope entered into the realm of professional theatre. Chapter III compared and contrasted the Spanish and Italian renditions of the Hermenegildo tragedies by pointing out the different literary strategies and models they followed. This section stressed how the Italian tragedies adhered more closely to the pseudo-Aristotelian unities, and the seventeenth century notions of decorum and verisimilitude.

The present chapter shifts the research of the Hermenegildo trope in several ways: from Spain, the center of colonial power, to the territory of New Spain in the Americas; from Spanish male writers to a Mexican Creole female writer; and from the theatre of the Jesuit college to the celebrations for the Feast of Corpus Christi. This section investigates Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *El mártir del sacramento*, *San Hermenegildo*, an *auto sacramental* by the nun many scholars hail as the first female intellectual of Latin America. The focus will be on how Sor Juana's dramatic work deconstructs the foundational principles with which the Jesuits had charged the story of the saint since its first appearance in 1590, and subtly but relentlessly shifts the focus of the story from the notion of sacrifice and bloodletting to that of the Eucharist. I will be comparing *El mártir del sacramento* to the 1590 Jesuit drama *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* in order to shed light on Sor Juana's conscious undermining of the Jesuit theological orthodoxy, as well as to illustrate the geopolitical contingencies and historical realities that shaped the dramatic content and form of her work and her vision of the colonial world. This section will address Sor Juana's subaltern position as a Creole woman and consider it as a relevant factor for the genesis and epistemological purpose of her *auto*.

### **5.1.1 Sor Juana**

Since the publication of Octavio Paz's *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, o, las trampas de la fe* (translated into English by Margaret Sayers Peden in 1988 as *Sor Juana or the Tramps of Faith*) there have been numerous studies written on the famous Mexican nun. Many of these have highlighted the proto-feminist bent traceable in Sor Juana's works, many have investigated the

literary output of the intellectual in light of the living conditions within a seventeenth century nunnery, and others have concentrated on Sor Juana's individual works or have delved into the wide variety of disciplines she addresses in her writings. No matter how different in scope these books might be, their authors cannot help but marvel at Sor Juana's literary and intellectual achievements. Her gender and the restrictive environment in which she lived and operated have transcended her uniquely accomplished scholarship and turned her, both in academic and non-academic circles, into a symbol of intellectual resilience, a fighter for gender equality, and a precursor of modern thought. Sor Juana has reached such a degree of notoriety that even fictional writers have appropriated her life in books such as *Sor Juana's Second Dream: A Novel* by Alicia Gaspar de Alba and *Sor Juana or the Breath of Heaven: The Essential Story from the Epic, Hunger's Brides* by Paul Anderson. Cinema has also felt the fascination for Sor Juana, and the 1990 movie *Yo, la peor de todas* (I, the Worst of All) by director Maria Luisa Bemberg pays tribute to Sor Juana's proto-feminist ideas and takes a strong stance against the oppressiveness of the chauvinistic culture where she lived.

Juana de Asbaje y Ramírez was born in San Miguel Nepantla, Mexico, in 1651. Abandoned by her father, she was brought up and educated first by her grandfather in Mexico City and, when he died, by an aunt. From a tender age, she demonstrated a studious attitude and an eagerness for knowledge thought unfit for her social status and gender. Supposedly, she entered the convent of the Carmelitas Descalzas (the Barefoot Carmelites) in 1667 to avoid marriage, but she left the strict order a few months later. In 1669, she entered the convent of the more lenient order of Saint Jerome with the promise she would be able to freely pursue her beloved studies. The Jesuit priest Antonio Núñez de Miranda, who will later become her confessor, was instrumental in Sor Juana's taking her vows. In spite of the many demands of the

convent life, Sor Juana produced an enormous quantity of literary work: *loas*, *autos sacramentales*, plays, and poetry, together with spiritual, confessional, and theological works. Her erudition was such that she gained instant fame at court where she entertained the viceroy, the marquis of Mancera, and later the new viceroy, Tomás de la Cerda, marquis of La Laguna. During her short life, she accumulated an enormous collection of scientific instruments and one of the largest private libraries in all of Latin America. Thanks to her powerful friends at court and her connection with the major intellectuals of her time, Sor Juana managed to dodge criticism and the clerical prohibition to write. Nevertheless, her fate changed drastically in 1690, the year her *Crisis sobre un sermón*, better known as *Carta atenagórica*, was published. This was a short essay that the nun had written to confute the famous 1650 *Sermón del mandato*, written by Jesuit preacher Antonio Vieira and dealing with the major proof of Christ's love for mankind. Unknowingly to Sor Juana, the bishop of Puebla, Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, printed and distributed the *Carta atenagórica* and wrote a letter under the pseudonym of Sor Filotea which he included as a prologue to Sor Juana's essay. In this text, he vehemently attacked Sor Juana and invited her to renounce her egotistic and earthly aspirations for more appropriate religious conduct. Sor Juana answered this personal assault three months later with her *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*, her most biographical work. Here she explained in details the nature of her passion for knowledge and tackled the issue of women's education and place in society. The story of the controversy surrounding the publication of the *Carta atenagórica* is still mysterious and fascinating. Most scholars agree that either the Catholic establishment set Sor Juana up to silence her writings, or that the bishop of Puebla, Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, deliberately manipulated her to upset the Archbishop of Mexico, who was a great admirer of Vieira's work.

Due to strong pressure from the Jesuits and the Archbishop of Mexico, Sor Juana could not escape severe punishment. All her books were confiscated, her instruments sold, and her freedoms revoked. This blow marked the end of Sor Juana's writing and her total retirement from public life. In 1694, she asked Antonio Núñez de Miranda to be again her confessor after they had interrupted their relationship in 1690, and dedicated herself completely to the care of others. In 1695, she contracted the plague while attending her sick sisters. She died on April 17 of the same year.

According to Octavio Paz, Sor Juana composed *El mártir del sacramento, San Hermenegildo* between 1680 and 1688.<sup>385</sup> Susana Hernández Araico hypothesizes that the date might be 1685 because that year would have marked the eleven hundredth anniversary of the saint's death and, possibly, a public ceremony and a stage representation would have been arranged for the occasion.<sup>386</sup> The stage directions call for four *carros* of two levels each and the use of spectacular effects, such as the clouds on which Truth, Mercy, Peace, and Justice appear in the beginning. Nevertheless, scholars have no documentary source available to determine when, where, or even if this *auto* was ever represented in Mexico or Spain. What is clear is that the author wanted it to be performed in Spain, because the *loa* that precedes it includes a lengthy salutation to the Spanish monarchs. It is likely that it did receive a production in the San Jeronimo convent for the Feast of Corpus Christi and one in Spain, especially considering that the Countess of Paredes got it published in 1692 in Seville in the second volume of Sor Juana's collected works and it was customary to publish plays that had been previously staged.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> From now on, the title of the *auto* will be listed as *El mártir del sacramento*.

<sup>386</sup> Susana Hernández Araico, "El montaje de *El mártir del Sacramento*: Sor Juana y san Hermenegildo, entre jesuitas y sevillanos. Homenaje a Alfredo Hermenegildo." Carmen Beatriz López-Portillo (ed.) *Sor Juana y su Mundo: Una Mirada Actual. Memorias del Congreso Internacional* (Mexico: 1998), 261

<sup>387</sup> "En el siglo seventeenth ningún dramaturgo, salvo Cervantes, publica su teatro sin que se haya montado antes." "In the seventeenth century no dramatists, with the exception of Cervantes, published his dramas unless they had been staged before." *Ibid*, 255.



Furthermore, *El mártir del sacramento* was a more than appropriate play for the Feast of Corpus Christi, which celebrated the importance of the Eucharistic sacrament in the lives of all Christians.

### 5.1.2 *El mártir del sacramento* and the challenges of theatre and theology

The idea to write *San Hermenegildo, el mártir del sacramento* came to Sor Juana after reading Jesuit priest Juan de Mariana's *Historia de España*, a late sixteenth century historical account of Spain's history.<sup>388</sup> However, given Sor Juana's connections with Spain, guaranteed by her friendship with the Countess of Paredes, and her profound interest in literature and theatre, it is more than plausible that she knew about the success of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* when it was staged at the Society of Jesus's college of Seville in 1590. She might also have heard about Calderón de la Barca's *El primer blasón católico de España*, an *auto* staged in 1661 but that is now lost, or about Hoz y Mota's *El primer blasón de España, San Hermenegildo*, which was never printed. It is also possible that she had known about Lope de Vega's *La mayor corona*, although this play was published after her death.<sup>389</sup>

While Juan de Mariana's chronicle provided the historical data and background for Sor Juana's play, it is quite clear that she had a profound and personal interest in the topic of the Jesuit martyr. Sor Juana was well aware of the doctrinal and political agendas of the Society of Jesus. She had a close, if conflictive, relationship with her Jesuit confessor Antonio Núñez de

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<sup>388</sup> Juan de Mariana is the same controversial Jesuit priest discussed in chapter I. He got the Society of Jesus in trouble for tackling the legitimacy of regicide in *De rege et regis institutione*.

<sup>389</sup> Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras Completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Autos y Loas*. Vol. III (Mexico-Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1955), LXXIX.

Miranda, and the Jesuitical discourses, debates, and treatises always fascinated her eagerness for knowledge and theology. More importantly, Sor Juana was aware that Hermenegildo was a Jesuit character and by composing a play about him, she might have wanted to impress the Society of Jesus.

Astuta selección del tema por parte de Sor Juana en alabanza de la monarquía, la casa noble andaluza-sevillana Medinaceli de los virreyes, y la orden de los jesuitas con quien le convenía congraciarse, pues, como vimos, san Hermenegildo es un héroe jesuítico además de sevillano.<sup>390</sup>

It is hard to establish whether it was the topic of Hermenegildo's martyrdom that attracted Sor Juana, or whether she saw in the story a politically safe opportunity to delve into theology, a realm of study that as a woman she was precluded from tackling. It is beyond dispute, however, that she wrote a highly sophisticated piece of dramatic literature that is full of theological speculation. Sor Juana's intention to disguise as much as possible her 'unnatural' and socially unacceptable desire to delve into the study of theology led the nun to rely on theatre, a medium of communication and social interaction based on the notions of fictional and make-believe actions, and drawing strongly on metaphors and allegories. By adopting the allegorical and symbolical *auto sacramental* as her literary medium, Sor Juana disguised her true intention to preach on the subject of theology and deflected the reader's attention from the content of the play, which is theologically charged, to its *auto sacramental* form, less innocuous than the serious theological tract. For instance, in the *loa* to *El divino Narciso*, the allegorical character Religion states that an *auto sacramental* is nothing more than a metaphorical idea dressed in rhetorical color.

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<sup>390</sup> "The topic was a clever choice for Sor Juana in that it celebrated the monarchy, the viceroy's Andalusian-Sevillian lineage of the Medinaceli, and the order of the Jesuits, which Sor Juana conveniently ingratiates because San Hermenegildo was a Jesuit hero besides being from Seville." Susana Hernández Araico, 261.

Pues vamos. Que en una idea  
Metafórica, vestida  
De retóricos colores,  
Representable a tu vista,  
Te la mostraré...<sup>391</sup>

The theatrical filter manages to distance the subject from its immediate significance, allows the audience to experience it through their senses, not just through their intellect, and conveys to the story an idea of entertainment and pleasure that the theological tract could not allow. Since preaching in a church was not permitted to Juana because she was a woman, her dramas and *villancicos* were the means she adopted to lecture on the topics she deemed interesting.<sup>392</sup>

Intellectuality was a difficult achievement for women living in the seventeenth century Spanish colonies because of the biases and prejudices surrounding the issue of female education, as well as the impenetrable boundaries of the all-male literary citadel.

Y si la ignorancia fue la estrategia general de la dominación española, la sexualización del saber fue una estrategia particular de los letrados, quienes llegaron a cohesionarse alrededor de cerradas “cofradías” o “hermandades” literarias estrictamente masculinas e impenetrables.<sup>393</sup>

The colonial woman inhabits, as Mabel Moraña says, the margins and interlines of the masculine discourse. However, her identity is more complex than that of a passive victim of a chauvinist world. She is simultaneously the oppressed victim of an androcentric society, and a multifaceted, if still reticent, subject. She is both a producer of cultural values and a product of

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<sup>391</sup> “Come on, now. I will show it to you in a metaphorical idea, dressed in rhetorical colors in front of your very eyes.” Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras Completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, 17-18.

<sup>392</sup> Michelle Gonzales, *Sor Juana. Beauty and Justice in the Americas* (New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 44.

<sup>393</sup> “Ignorance was the general strategy of the Spanish domination, while the sexualization of knowledge was the particular strategy of the literati who organized themselves into literary confraternities that were also strictly masculine and impenetrable.” Luisa Campozaño (ed.), *Mujeres latinoamericanas: Historia y cultura. Siglos XVI al XIX* (Ciudad de la Habana: Fondo Editorial casa de las Américas, 1997), 16.

male discourses.<sup>394</sup> Scholars working in the fields of literary feminism, border theory, and colonial and post-colonial studies have rediscovered the many women and subaltern subjects whose works and literary contributions had been buried under centuries of white male scholarship.<sup>395</sup> Juana Ines de la Cruz is one of the discoveries.

Little matters whether Sor Juana's prolific career resulted from the displacement of her maternal instinct onto literary endeavors, as Ludwig Pfandl seems to suggest in *La decima musa de México*, or that she was the product of a triangular configuration given by her absent father, her grandfather, and her mother, as Octavio Paz sustains in his interesting biography of the writer.<sup>396</sup> While both theories are fascinating in their own way, psychological configurations are insufficient tools to assess Sor Juana's intellectual and psychological makeup without a deeper investigation of the convent's living conditions, and their effect on the author. Since she wrote all three autos after she took her vows, it would be unreasonable to argue that convent life did not impact their conception and composition. What is truly exceptional is Sor Juana's ability to circumvent the limits of her subaltern position as a woman, and establish a reputation as a writer and intellectual. Certainly, psychology and upbringing forged the kind of person and artist she was; however, her dramatic works communicate more than simply her character and personality. They carry Sor Juana's intention to disguise her truly intellectual goals in the face of a misogynistic environment, to mix theology and metaphors so that the former would not be

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<sup>394</sup> "...la mujer como presencia mítica, como sujeto histórico y social, como productora cultural y como imagen producida por los discursos dominantes a partir de los modelos y paradigmas que constituyeron el imaginario patriarcal de Occidente y conformaron el sustrato ideológico fundacional de la América hispana." ("...woman as a mythical presence, as a historical and social subject, and as both a producer and a product of the dominant discourses that started the models and paradigms that constituted the patriarchal imaginary of the West and shaped the foundational ideological substratum of Hispanic America.") Mabel Moraña (ed.), *Mujer y cultura en la colonia hispanoamericana* (Pittsburgh: Biblioteca de América, 1996), 8.

<sup>395</sup> An example of such literature is Andrien Kenneth (eds.) *The Human Tradition in Colonial Latin America* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2002).

<sup>396</sup> Stephanie Merrim, *Feminist Perspective on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1991), 13.

noticeable, and to preach and be heard without approaching the pulpit. Through her friendship with the viceroy and the major Mexican intellectuals of her times, Sor Juana managed to write extensively on a variety of subjects, and eventually she achieved her greater goal of seeing her work published in Spain.

Using the theatre as a tool of religious education allowed Sor Juana to approach, indirectly, discursive genres such as interrogation, sermon, and admonition that were reserved for men only. As a woman she was permitted only to write either autobiographical or confessional narratives. In fact, autobiography was the one genre women were not only allowed but encouraged to use while in convent. There are, in fact, numerous autobiographies written by nuns in seventeenth century Mexico. Kathleen Ann Myers notes that “they form a *petite histoire* for Spanish America and give insight into how religious women –who are almost entirely absent in traditional historiography and literary canons of the colonial period- were, in fact, central to the building of America’s Christian identity.”<sup>397</sup> Sometimes these books fall into the category of confessional narrative in that they deal with how the individual reached the true faith and the various temptations from the Devil encountered in their journey to God. The form of self-expression guaranteed to women, then, was that of talking about themselves to other women. As a matter of fact, these biographical and confessional books were often recorded and published by the women’s confessors with the goal of educating other women. The ever-present confessor exerted his control in channeling women’s writing towards edifying objectives and educational ends. Thanks to the cunning disguise of her theological ideas, Sor Juana was able to escape for quite some time the use of autobiography as the only means of artistic expression and communication for a woman. Nevertheless, no matter how exceptional or privileged, she was

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<sup>397</sup> Myers, Kathleen Ann. *Neither Saints nor Sinners: Writing the Lives of Women in Spanish America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.3.

still a woman and the social rules of her time would catch up with her and punish her severely after the scandal of the *Carta atenagórica* erupted, and she found herself up against the powerful Society of Jesus.

### 5.1.3 Plot description

In the first and second scenes of *El mártir del sacramento*, Faith (Fe) interacts with Truth (Verdad), Mercy (Misericordia), Peace (Paz), and Justice (Justicia), four of the most prominent allegorical characters of the play. Faith reaffirms its role as “cimiento” (cement) of all other Christian virtues and addresses the difference between Christian and moral qualities. She defines the task of each virtue in relationship to the role they will have during the course of the play in helping Hermenegildo in his perilous conflict against his father, the King Leovigildo. In scene 3, a third *carro*, or pageant wagon, opens up to show Hermenegildo asleep, surrounded by all the virtues of scene 2. The allegorical figures represent, and act out, the prince’s internal conflict between his respect for his father’s authority and the strict demands of his new faith, which bids him to fight against the Arianistic heresy. Alfredo Hermenegildo states that the allegorical characters take on “un cierto número de funciones de los héroes; o mejor, en las figuras morales se exteriorizan y visualizan las dudas y tensiones interiores de Hermenegildo y Leovigildo.”<sup>398</sup> Justice and Truth incite the hero to wage war against Leovigildo by saying “¡Marcha, marcha! / ¡Deja el sosiego! ¡Toma las armas!” (“March, march! Stop doubting. Get the weapons”), while Peace and Mercy want to persuade him to pursue a peaceful truce and bid him “¡Pausa, pausa! /

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<sup>398</sup> “(Allegorical characters assume) some of the functions of the heroes; or, to be more precise, the doubts and internal tensions of Hermenegildo and Leovigildo are externalized and visualized in the moral figures.” Alfredo Hermenegildo, “La disolución del personaje dramático: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz y el auto sacramental,” 247.

¡Deja el estruendo! ¡Cesen las armas!”( Stop, stop! Suspend the war roar! Depose your weapon.”)<sup>399</sup> The virtues carry on the interaction with Hermenegildo even after he awakens, and their conversation is highly theatrical, for the presence of allegorical characters, as well as moving for the believable conflict of the protagonist. Hermenegildo’s pondering is interrupted by the arrival of Leovigildo’s ambassador, Geserico, who reminds Hermenegildo of the history of the Visigoths, his royal lineage, and his responsibility towards his father and his people. Geserico’s speech ends with the promise that Leovigildo would act with forgiveness and paternal love if Hermenegildo refrains from pursuing the insurrection, but it also threatens him with vengeance if he stubbornly continues the civil war. The prince swears he will think about his father’s proposition, and the ambassador leaves. In scene 5, Ingunda, who has overheard the conversation between Hermenegildo and Geserico, is concerned about her husband’s spiritual strength and asks him what his intentions are with regard to the peace offer advanced by Leovigildo. Hermenegildo replies that he will not be able to decide until his Uncle Leandro, the archbishop of Seville, comes back from the court of Tiberio where he has been sent to request military support. In scene 6, Leandro enters with mixed news from Tiberio. The Catholic emperor is willing to sponsor Hermenegildo’s fight against Arianism but he demands as hostages Ingunda and Teodorico, the only son of Hermenegildo and Ingunda. The protagonist is discouraged at hearing the news but after witnessing Ingunda’s determination to accept her destiny and hearing the encouraging words of Leandro, he consents to the offer with humble devotion. The certainty of his martyrdom is already foreseen clearly by the three characters: Hermenegildo’s line “¡Todo es de Dios, nada es mío! / ¡Cúmplase su voluntad!” (“everything belongs to God, nothing is mine. May God’s will be done”) attests his recognition of God’s greater design for his life, while Ingunda’s declaration “Mi esposo está enternecido” (“My

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<sup>399</sup> Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras Completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Autos y Loas*. Vol. III, 124-127.

husband is moved”) underlines Hermenegildo’s new state of mind. Leandro’s invocation to God to “¡Perfeccionad vos la obra / Con vuestro amor infinito, / Para que el fin de su vida / No desdiga del principio” turns the attention of the audience to the inevitability of Hermenegildo’s martyrdom and foreshadows the end of the play.<sup>400</sup>

Scene 7, which opens the second *cuadro*, or section, of the play depicts Leovigildo as he deals with the images and suggestions brought about by his own Fantasy (Fantasía). Fantasy represents the inner turmoil of the king, torn by his fears of losing the throne and the dangers caused by abandoning the Arian doctrine. In order to convince the king to avenge “... las afrentas / Que de tu imperio y casa, por tu ruina, / Hacerte tu hijo mismo determina / Con mudar religion,” Fantasy conjures up a tableau full of important characters and powerful images of Visigothic history.<sup>401</sup> The intent is to reconnect the king to his ancestors and show him the longstanding tradition of Arian monarchs leading up to his own persona. Scene 8 displays Spain sitting on a throne, fully armed, and dressed in imperial robes. Fame (Fama) sits at her side while a display with a number of crowns and scepters lay at the other side. What follows is a ceremonial procession of Spanish kings who all stop in front of Spain to receive a crown and a scepter. Ataúlfo, Sigerico, Valia, Teodoredo, Turismundo, Teodorico, Eurico, Alarico, Gesaleico, Amalarico, Teudis, Teudiselo, Agila, and Atanagildo are all announced as they ritually pronounce their lineage and accept from the hands of Spain the symbols of their sovereignty. When Leovigildo asks in scene 10 the reason for the representation of his predecessors, Fantasy explains that religion was the connective tissue that guaranteed the

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<sup>400</sup> “Perfect his work with your infinite love so that the end of his life won’t prove its beginning wrong.” Ibid,142.

<sup>401</sup> “Revenge the defiance that your own son, by changing religion, brought on your house and kingdom with the purpose to ruin you.” Ibid, 144.



survival of the Visigoth monarchy and its success, and that “cuando ella falte, ha de faltarte todo” (“When you are missing it [*religion*], everything will be missing.”)<sup>402</sup>

In the two scenes that follow, Geserico reports to the king that Hermenegildo has turned down the peace offer and Leovigildo decides to go to war. Leovigildo’s Arian bishop Apostasy (Apostasía) fully supports the king’s resolution while Recaredo would prefer a new negotiation to avoid the civil war against his brother. This second section ends in a dramatic tone and sense of urgent expectation.

In scene 13, which opens the third *cuadro* of the play, Justice and Truth fight with Peace and Mercy over which pair should have a crown made of laurel, each claiming the right to own the reward based on their strength and valor. Truth recognizes the pettiness of their argument but she also remarks on the greater role played by Justice and Truth in the unraveling of Hermenegildo’s personal life, “pues la Paz abandonando, / En defensa de la Fe, / Con su mismo padre rompe.”<sup>403</sup> In scene 14, Faith announces that in spite of Hermenegildo’s righteous cause, his military force is inferior to that of his father and, for that reason, he has been forced to retire to Oset. This brief declaration is interrupted by the arrival of Hermenegildo himself who discusses the outcome of the battle with a soldier. The four allegorical figures interject with them and, in the end, they all resolve to fight as Faith promises to give the laurel crown to the one who deserves it the most on the battlefield. As the group leaves, Leovigildo, Recaredo, and Apostasy, accompanied by soldiers, arrive on stage. The king incites everybody to show no mercy toward the rebels and this group too moves quickly offstage. The decisive battle is not portrayed in front of the audience but its results are shown in scene 16, wherein Hermenegildo appears defeated and disarmed. In his meeting with Recaredo, he accepts the advice of his brother to surrender to

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid, 152.

<sup>403</sup> “By rejecting peace, he breaks with his own father to defend his faith.” Ibid, 161.

their father but is skeptical about the king's pardon. In fact, when he finds himself in the presence of Leovigildo, the monarch orders his guards to take Hermenegildo to the prison. Once more, the prince acknowledges his role in God's greater plans by saying "¡Ya yo veo, / Que esto es lo que quiere Dios!" ("I now see that this is God's will.")<sup>404</sup> Leovigildo consults with Apostasy about the dangers posed against the state by Hermenegildo's Catholic faith and they both agree that his life will be spared only if he is willing to abjure his faith. Apostasy promises to visit the captive to offer him the Holy Communion on Easter Sunday. Whether he will accept the sacrament will be the final test to decide Hermenegildo's destiny as Leovigildo clarifies: "Y así, que resuelva presto / O a darte a ti la obediencia, / o a dar a un verdugo el cuello."<sup>405</sup>

The fourth section of Sor Juana's *auto sacramental* shows Hermenegildo in one of the *carros* used for the performance, and he is dressed in humble clothes and restrained by chains. This is a recurrent iconographic pose in *comedias martiriológicas* which equates the bareness of the Christian hero's appearance to the simplicity and single mindedness of his resolution to die a martyr. In fact, Hermenegildo's monologue plays around the opposition of "ayer," the yesterday, and his present condition. He recalls the presence and encouragement of Ingunda in his life, and the extension of his power and dominions, and compares them to the solitude and bareness of his prison cell, and the prospect of execution. However, this is not a "tormento" for the prince because he is focused on his faith, "La fe que adoro, sola / Es la herencia que estimo. / De nada me lastimo, pues ella se acrisola."<sup>406</sup> His *vanitas vanitatum* speech marks a shift from the warrior prince to the devout martyr, a change required in the last segment of any martyr play. Scenes 20 through 23 portray the conversation between Apostasy and Hermenegildo about the sacrament of

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid, 169.

<sup>405</sup> "Ask him to decide soon, either to obey to you or to offer his neck to the executioner." Ibid, 173.

<sup>406</sup> "My faith, which I worship, is the only reward that I esteem. Nothing harms me because it gets stronger." Ibid, 175.

the Eucharist, remind the audience of the dogmatic differences between Arians and Catholics, and set the stage for the most important scene of the play, the representation of the sacrament of the Eucharist on the very stage.

The fifth and last *cuadro* starts with the executioner beheading Hermenegildo, a scene that ends dramatically with the curtain being pulled at the very moment of the decapitation. Immediately afterwards, the curtains of the second wagon are pulled open to display an altar with the Eucharistic host and red wine. Around the altar stand Music, Faith and the other characters representing virtues singing the praises of his actions. Although the script does not specify any details about the display of the sacramental symbols, it is quite certain that the Eucharistic *custodia* would have been the centerpiece of the scene. This was an ornate and precious towering receptacle, used during mass and also carried around during public ceremonies, and which consisted of a tall base of variable height that supported a sunburst motif, at the center of which was a glass sphere containing the Holy Host. Because of the transparency of the glass, the sacrament was fully visible to the audience. It is significant that the last scene of the play does not show the triumphal ascending of the saint to heaven but portrays instead the moment of the mass where the faithful partake of the flesh and blood of Christ. The end of Sor Juana's *auto* reflects on the role of Hermenegildo as defender of the Eucharist's purity against the heretical Apostasy while establishing fruitful comparisons between the roles of Jesus and Hermenegildo. It also makes clear that the storyline continues in the daily performance of the Eucharistic sacrament during the mass.

#### 5.1.4 The journey from sacrifice to sacrament

There are evident similarities between Sor Juana's *El mártir del sacramento* and the Jesuit *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, such as their extensive use of allegorical characters, their acute didacticism, their inherent theatricality, and, of course, their storylines. Nevertheless, the two plays are quite different in their dramaturgical structures and especially in their epistemological objectives. The Spanish play is a full fledged tragedy in five acts designed for public performances within the Jesuit college, while the Mexican one is an *auto sacramental* of much shorter length written to be performed most likely during the Feast of Corpus Christi by a cast of nuns. The length of *El mártir del sacramento* forces its author to condense scenes together, to eliminate completely the subplot of the Byzantines' betrayal, to limit the discussion of the Trinity to the final *cuadro*, and to reduce the number of characters. Nevertheless, the major difference between the two plays lies in their spiritual messages and their vision and expectation of the secular world. Comparing the two plays unveils their distinctive ideas about the mission and role of the Church in the Americas, and their dissimilar understanding of what constituted the core message of Christianity. The following pages will address how Sor Juana's dramatic work consciously manipulated the tenets of the Hermenegildo story by transferring its focus from the sacrificial sphere of the martyr's death and reallocating it into the sacramental realm of the Eucharist.

The Spanish tragedy is structured around couplings of dichotomous and oppositional forces: Hermenegildo (Christian hero) versus Leovigildo (pagan villain), Catholic bishop versus Arian bishop, allegorical figure supporting Catholicism versus allegorical figures espousing the schismatic doctrine. One pair appears to be particularly worth noticing, that of *cuervo* and *alma*.

Hermenegildo views the body as the material shell imprisoning the eternal soul and for this reason death is not a punishment to him, instead it is a liberating experience enabling him to achieve his heavenly destiny. Chapter III has pointed out how the image of the *alma* surviving the mortal body recurs repeatedly in this tragedy, and always in the hierarchical connotation of the soul over the body. In act V of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, when Leovigildo threatens to put his son in prison, Hermenegildo replies by saying “Si el cuerpo estuviere atado, el alma estará más libre” (“Even when the body is chained, the soul is free.”)<sup>407</sup> In the discussion he has with his father, Hermenegildo appears defiant of the threat of capital punishment, because to him the eternity of the soul is more important than the temporality of the body. He equates the “cruda morte” (“atrocious death”) Leovigildo can inflict with “mi palma, y mi gloria” (“my palm and my glory.”) The Jesuit hero idealizes death as the means to a better life and fully welcomes it in the final act of the tragedy. In fact, when he is told of the death of Ingunda, instead of despair he exhibits an otherworldly calmness, and the desire to be reunited with her soon in the afterlife. At the end of act V, Leovigildo, after having tried numerous times to break Hermenegildo’s faith, orders the death penalty. Hermenegildo is beheaded and dies kissing the crucifix, which he interprets as a mirroring image of Christ.

Since the divinity of Christ is reflected in the same object that was used to put him to death, the cross, one can infer that divinity is achieved by willingly sacrificing one’s own life.<sup>408</sup> The portrayal of Hermenegildo’s violent martyrdom is a tenet of the Jesuit tragedy and it is as conceptually tied to the dramaturgical aims of the *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* as it is in the Jesuitical vision of the world. The notion of a gruesome death introduces the audience not

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<sup>407</sup> *San Hermenegildo*, 4815-4816, 4819-4820.

<sup>408</sup> Jesuits’ drama is fascinated with the cross as a symbol both of suffering and redemption. One of the most relevant tragedy dealing with this theme is the *Christus Xylonicus* written by Nicolaus Bartholomaeus in 1529. ‘Xylonicus’ means victory on the wood. See Donald Bryant ed., *The Rhetorical Idiom. Essays in Rhetoric, Oratory, Language, and Drama* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1958), 273.

only to the risks, but, more importantly, to the rewards of undertaking missionary work in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. By depicting martyrdom as worthy of a heroic protagonist, the Society of Jesus appealed to the many young priests who might consider embarking on missionary work overseas, and at the same time memorialized the ones who had already died by turning them into models of Christian devotion. The worship of the martyrs' relics, which the Council of Trent had repeatedly advocated, supports the full exploitation of the missionaries' brutal deaths by using their remains during public and private ceremonies. It also exemplifies the Church's need to objectify sainthood in material symbols of human suffering, as discussed in chapter I.

The 1590 *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* draws on the binary relationship of body and soul to encourage in its audience the renunciation of the mortal experience and the consequent embracing of the afterlife. In so doing, it stresses the importance of life sacrifice as a means to achieve greater good, both for oneself and for one's own community. When Sor Juana directs her attention to the story of Hermenegildo, however, it is to contest the very values that the Society of Jesus deemed worthy in it, especially the hero's mystic desire for death. Sor Juana's emphasis on the Eucharistic sacrament is evident also in her adoption of the *auto sacramental* as a theatrical medium instead of tragedy *tout court*. In fact, this dramatic form started with the establishment of the Feast of Corpus Christi, a festivity celebrating the Eucharist that included special masses, solemn processions, and celebrative corteges during which "the sacred host was carried out of the church and through the main streets of the city or town."<sup>409</sup>

*El mártir del sacramento* and the *loa* that precedes it investigate the significance of Christ's sacrifice for mankind in direct relation to the Eucharist. In the *loa*, two students argue whether the major proof of Christ's love was his death on the cross, as Augustine had said, or his

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<sup>409</sup> Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken: The Calvinist Doctrine of the Eucharist and the Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16.

establishing the sacrament of the Eucharist, as Thomas Aquinas had argued. As the two students cannot find a satisfactory answer to their dispute, a third student, who represents the voice of Sor Juana, sets out to answer their question by showing two scenes.

Pues ahora,  
Ya sabéis que mis desvelos  
A Naturaleza apuran  
Los más cultos secretos  
De la Magia natural  
Y que con mi ciencias puedo  
Finger, ya en la perspectives  
De la luna de un espejo,  
O ya condensando el aire  
Con los vapores más terreos;  
.....  
Y cuando aquesto no pueda,  
Demos que el entendimiento  
Con alegóricos entes  
Hace visibles objetos.  
Y eligiendo lo segundo  
Si no admitís lo primero,  
Os pretendo mostrar....<sup>410</sup>

In a scene that is visually very effective and, as Alfonso Méndez Plancarte said, reminiscent of the *intermezzi*, Sor Juana displays a clear and effective example of theatre within theatre. By addressing the power of theatre to surprise and astonish the audience with rapid scene changes, the third student introduces two scenes that are going to answer the theological question about Jesus' *mayor fineza* (major proof of love), whether it be his death on the cross or his institution of the Eucharist. The first scene displays Hercules in the act of placing the columns at the Straits of Gibraltar to mark the end of the known world: "Aquí, soldados, fijemos las Columnas, en

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<sup>410</sup> "Well, you both know already that my work aims at unraveling the most obscure secrets of Nature and that by using my science I can fake on the surface of a mirror or condense the air with the most terrestrial vapors ... And when this is not possible, we accept that our understanding makes visible objects thanks to allegorical characters. Choosing the second method, if you don't accept the first, I intend to show you ..." Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras Completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Autos y Loas*. Vol. III, 103.

señal de que es el término extremo del Mundo, y que no hay más Mundo que el que ha Hércules descubierto. ... *Non plus ultra! Non plus ultra!* Aquí acaba el Universo!”<sup>411</sup>

The second scene describes the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas, a fact that disproves the boundaries of the world set by Hercules in the previous scene and opens up the possibility of knowing other worlds: “La Tórrida es habitable a beneficios del cielo! Plus ultra! Más mundos hay, y ya venimos de verlos! ... Borre Hércules sus Columnas; fije Colón sus trofeos!”<sup>412</sup> When the two students complain about the redundancy of the Hercules and Columbus scenes and ask what they mean, the third student replies:

Pues mirad si son superfluos.  
No haber más Mundo creía  
Hércules en su blasón,  
Mas se echó al agua Colón  
Y vio que más mundo había.  
Así cuando se entendía  
Que el llegar a padecer  
Era del Sumo Poder  
La empresa mayor que vieron  
Se echó al agua, y conocieron  
Que quedaba más que hacer<sup>413</sup>

In this passage Sor Juana reminds the spectators that Jesus washed his disciples’ feet as an act of purification before he transubstantiated his flesh and blood during the last supper, an event that preceded and led to the establishment of the Eucharistic sacrament. By washing his inferiors’ feet Christ proved the primal importance of being ‘clean’ in the face of the Lord, and by

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<sup>411</sup> “Here, soldiers, establish the columns as a sign that this is the end of the world and that there are no more worlds, except the one Hercules has discovered. Non plus ultra! Non plus ultra! Here is the end of the world.” Ibid, 104-105.

<sup>412</sup> “To the benefit of Heaven, the torrid regions of the earth are habitable ... More worlds exist and we have just started to see them. Erase, Hercules, his columns. Establish, Columbus, his trophies.” Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>413</sup> “Consider if they are superfluous! Hercules believed in his ignorance that there was no other world, but Columbus took on the seas and found out that there was another world. In the same way, when it was believed that suffering death was Christ’s major act, he procured himself water and everybody realized that there was more to do.” Ibid. 110-111.



instituting, immediately afterwards the Eucharist, he also provided them with the unique opportunity to perpetuate spiritual cleanliness from sin.

The centrality of the Eucharist is also evident in the figurative depiction of Hercules and Columbus, allegories that the third student, as Sor Juana's alter ego, uses to prove that further investigation and research can disprove any preconceived knowledge. Sor Juana wants to point out that learning is an ongoing process and erudition never stops. Her tales defy the very existence of infallible beliefs and highlight the value of the intellectual research and investigative spirit of which Columbus is an example. She also stresses the necessity to be humble and change one's own opinion when irrefutable proofs substantiate new truths. In light of this lesson, what she really intended to say was that Thomas Aquinas was right in placing Christ's major proof of love in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Contrary to the conclusions reached by the Spanish *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo*, which viewed death as the *non plus ultra* of self-sacrifice and abnegation, Sor Juana transposes the epistemological value of the story of the saint into a symbolical and allegorical realm.

Showing Hercules being defeated by Columbus is even more poignant in discussing *El mártir del sacramento* because the lavish *entretenimiento* that was staged in 1590 with *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* was titled *Hércules, vencedor de la ignorancia*. It displayed the Greek hero rescuing the allegorical character of Science from the tower where Ignorance kept her captive. As Julio Alonso Asenjo has argued, in this theatrical entertainment, Hermenegildo and Hercules symbolize Seville and la Ciencia represents the legacy of the educational activity of the Society of Jesus in Spain. Sor Juana opposes Hercules' role as savior and protector, which the Jesuits had charged him with, and has him lose to Columbus and the new world. She uses the very same expression 'Non plus ultra' that Hercules employs in *La tragedia de San*

*Hermenegildo* to define his glorious enterprise (“Sevilla hará eterna mi memoria / Do pondré el ‘Non plus ultra’ de mi gloria”) but she undermines it with Columbus’ ‘plus ultra’, represented by his discovery of America.<sup>414</sup> By undercutting Hercules’ accomplishment, Sor Juana contests the ideological assumptions of *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* and repositions herself and her work in opposition to them. She also transposes the moral focus of the *Hermenegildo* story from continental Europe, specifically Seville, Spain, to the shores of America, which Columbus had discovered two hundred years earlier.

Sor Juana’s *auto sacramental* works synoptically with the *loa* that precedes it in reinforcing the same view about the Eucharist and stressing the role of *Hermenegildo* as representative and defender of the sacrament. The relevance of *pan*, the bread, cannot be emphasized enough in the *auto*. While on one hand the bread symbolizes the body as the vehicle of eternal salvation, on the other it reconnects the story with the mystery of transubstantiation during the Holy Communion. The symbolic eating of Christ’s body guarantees divine pardon and forgiveness for humans, and makes a clean conscience available for all sinners. Therefore, it is not Christ’s death that is the greatest proof of his love, but the institution of the Eucharist, which reenacts *ad infinitum* the miracle of divine forgiveness through the consumption of the Host. In Sor Juana’s *auto*, Faith and Virtue repeat the value of the Eucharist, and, at the end of the drama, Peace sings that *Hermenegildo* is the only martyr of the sacrament.

While Sor Juana cannot, and does not want to, ignore the death of Christ, which virtually enabled the very rite of the Eucharist, she downplays its role by demonstrating the superiority of the sacrament over the sacrifice of Christ’s life. She substitutes the realistic depiction of the

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<sup>414</sup> “Seville will immortalize my memory and here I will place the ‘Non plus ultra’ of my glory.” Menéndez Peláez, 394.

crucifixion with the nonrepresentational and allegorical ritual of drinking and feeding on Christ, the foundational basis for the establishment of a community of faith.

Sor Juana's deconstruction of the Jesuit cult of death supported by the *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* is also evident in her characterization of Hermenegildo. It is revealing that her Hermenegildo accepts death and sees his destiny as a confirmation of God's will when he says "¡Hágace su voluntad!" ("May his will be fulfilled"), but he is also not as eager to die as his Jesuit counterpart is.<sup>415</sup> He does not entertain dreams of dismemberment, nor does he indulge in the morbid contemplation of his own death. On the contrary, when he loses the battle and is found by Recaredo weak and disarmed, he reacts very humanly by asking his brother to find him a place to hide: "Dame lugar de ocultarme" ("Give me a place to hide").<sup>416</sup> His attitude reflects an attachment to life as worthy of living that the Spanish Hermenegildo would have perceived as weak and undignified. While the Jesuit hero looks upon his death as an achievement and actively pursues his martyr's destiny, Sor Juana's protagonist sees his own death as the necessary reiteration and reminder of the Eucharistic sacrament, as well as an act of protection of the sacrament itself.

The theme of the Eucharist with its ritualized eating of Christ's body/bread and drinking his blood/wine during mass is incorporated at the end of the play with the meeting of Apostasy and Hermenegildo. In this occasion, Apostasy offers the captive Hermenegildo the sacrament of the Eucharist but he refuses it on the ground that Apostasy does not have the power or the authorization to administer it. When the bishop objects that he has the authority and the legitimacy to do it, Hermenegildo verbally attacks him:

No las tienes tal, supuesto

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<sup>415</sup> Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras Completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* Ibid., 170.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid, 166.

Que es un poder derivado  
De Cristo a Pedro, y de Pedro  
A todos sus Sucesores;  
Y tu, rebelde al imperio  
De sus Soberanas Llaves,  
Eres traidor comunero;  
Y aunque hagas las ceremonias,  
si no tiene el derecho  
De legítimo Ministro,  
No consagras.<sup>417</sup>

Sor Juana's biographer Octavio Paz describes this passage as containing a “theological lacuna” because the Catholic doctrine recognized the effectiveness of communion even when offered by a schismatic priest. Even though this is a correct assessment of Sor Juana’s inaccuracy, it is also true that both the historical sources relating the death of Hermenegildo and most of the tragedies inspired by his martyrdom mentioned the hero’s refusal to take the Holy Host from the hands of the Arian priest. Moreover, it is possible to consider another explanation to justify the apparent incorrectness of the above-mentioned passage. Sor Juana might have consciously changed what she knew as the accepted doctrine of the Church in order to stress her own personal ideas that forgiveness and salvation can come only through the Catholic faith, and through the hands of a Catholic man. By emphasizing the importance of the Catholic priest in administering a valid Communion, Sor Juana was implicitly rejecting the Protestant claim that man can access a personal relationship with God without the intercession of the religious intermediary. The author’s equating of the Arian heresy to the Protestant heresy could be a reasonable explanation in consideration of the fact that Protestant reformists had been fighting the Catholic Church over the very definition and application of the Eucharistic rite. Not only had

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<sup>417</sup> “You do not have them because it is a power passed on from Christ to Peter, and from Peter to all his successors. You are rebellious to his (Peter’s) sovereign keys, and nothing but a mutinous traitor. Even if you perform the ceremonies, you do not have the rights of a legitimate minister therefore you do not sanctify.” Ibid., 180.

they added to the consumption of the holy wafer also the drinking of the wine, which is reserved to the priest in the Catholic mass, they had also accused the Catholics of being idolatrous for their “adoration of the consecrated elements” which, especially according to the Calvinists, “leads people to seek the divine in material objects where God is not present and to neglect the real meaning of the sacrament.”<sup>418</sup>

Although there is no evidence that Sor Juana intended to underline the moral and religious separation of Hermenegildo from the Arian heresy, even at the risk of incurring a theological mistake, this explanation is the least problematic. Sor Juana’s immense interest and knowledge of the sacrament of the Eucharist makes her supposed error quite difficult to believe. Not only did she deal with the Eucharist in her three *autos*, she also drew on it in her *villancicos* to St. Bernard, and in the *Carta atenagórica*. Given her studious attitude, her profound interest in theological studies, and her inexhaustible curiosity, it would be difficult to believe that she did not know that an Arian priest could have administered a perfectly valid communion. It is conceivable that Sor Juana decided to have Hermenegildo refuse the Arian communion because she wanted to stress once more his uncompromising religious stance and keep him as far as possible from the tainting influence of heresy.

It is also reasonable to argue that Sor Juana thought that Hermenegildo did not need the sacrament provided by the host because he ‘had become’ the host. By the end of the *auto*, he represents the very essence of the Eucharist in that he becomes the only martyr who enables Spain to become a Catholic nation.

MISERICORDIA  
Gócese alegre España,  
y sus reyes excelsos,  
que en la sangre de un mártir

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<sup>418</sup> Christopher Elwood, 37.

La purpura tiñeron  
.....

PAZ  
Y aladas jerarquías  
A venerar el cuerpo  
Del mártir, y a adorer  
Tal alto sacra,  
De las esferas bajen, todos diciendo  
Que éste es el mártir solo  
Del Sacramento.<sup>419</sup>

It is through the symbolical and ritualized act of submerging their regal robes in the blood of Hermenegildo that the Spanish kings became truly Catholic. The transcendent power of Hermenegildo's death resides in its ability to bestow salvation on a large number of people, in fact a whole nation. Indeed, it is due to his sacrifice that Hermenegildo's brother Recaredo will turn to the Catholic faith, as will Spain. As the martyr's death happened only once but reverberated its influence through a thousand years of Spanish Catholicism, similarly the sacrifice of Christ, reenacted daily in the ceremony of the Holy Communion, guaranteed perpetual forgiveness to mankind. In both cases the emphasis of the narrative is on death's transitive power to affect the lives and choices of others. Christ's words at the last supper established the Eucharistic sacrament as the definitive emancipation from the old testament's reliance on animal sacrifice, and reiterated that the sacrifice of his perfect life saved all sinners ("For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins," Matthew 26:28). By fulfilling his command to "this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19), the community of faithful can access forgiveness for their sins without the necessity of sacrificing lives, whether their own or those of animal offerings.

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<sup>419</sup> "MERCY: Be happy, Spain and its excellent kings, because you dipped your royal robes in the blood of a martyr ... PEACE: May the winged hierarchy come down from the high spheres to adore the body of the martyr and worship such a prominent sacrament, all saying that he is the only martyr of the sacrament." Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras Completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, 183.

Octavio Paz has also criticized Sor Juana's supposed insensitivity towards "a terrible story, a drama of a struggle between blood relations and, at the same time, a political and religious conflict."<sup>420</sup> While Paz is correct in recognizing the flaws and limits of Sor Juana's drama, it is unwarranted to reproach Sor Juana for having embraced the aesthetical and doctrinarian expectations of religious theatre of the time. Paz asks a naïve question when he says, "Why did Sor Juana not show us the *other* Hermenegild, the ambitious, tyrannical rebel before martyrdom transfigured him?" Sor Juana, just like the other dramatists who dealt with the story of Hermenegildo, is not interested in either historical drama or documentary drama. She surely is not bogged down by issues of historical authenticity, nor by preoccupations with psychologically convincing characterizations. She wants to teach a lesson in theology, and she succeeds in doing that, in spite of her "mistakes" concerning the legitimacy of the Arian communion at the end of the play and the faulty characterization of Hermenegildo as innocent hero. Just as Hernando de Ávila, Melchor de la Selda, and Juan de Arguijo had done in the late 1500s, Sor Juana drew on the canonical rules of martyr's drama and adopted a theatrical formula that was not only well established, but had proven successful both in the motherland as well as in the colonies.

What Paz failed to see is the layered epistemological inferences radiating from Sor Juana's play, such as her criticism of Jesuit orthodoxy, her disapproval of the violent conquest of the Americas, and her reassessment of the core values of Christianity. *El mártir del sacramento* might be portraying Hermenegildo in too positive a light and it does contain some doctrinal flaws, as Paz reckons, but its real value lies in its documenting the personal and theological struggle of a courageous and talented woman as she defies and deconstructs the trope of Hermenegildo and the powerful ideological background of the Society of Jesus which sustains it.

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<sup>420</sup> Paz, 344.

The next section attempts to shed light on the centrality of the Eucharist in Sor Juana's philosophy by discussing the *loa* preceding *El divino Narciso*, and to illustrate how the author strategically employs the sacrament to address the topics of the conquest, and the relationship between the Spanish and indigenous populations.

### 5.1.5 The Eucharist as an Indian ceremony

The Eucharist and its use in shifting the experience of forgiveness and salvation from sacrifice of one's own life to the allegorical reality of the sacrament, is a *leitmotiv* in Sor Juana's other two dramatic works, *El cetro de San José* and *El divino Narciso*. Pamela Kirk recapitulates the fascination of Sor Juana with the sacrament in relation to the single aspects the author develops in her three *autos sacramentales*:

Each of Sor Juana's sacramental dramas is about different aspects of the Eucharist. Hermenegild, in his person, represents the effects of the "fruit" of Eucharist. He overcomes the conflicting demands of the virtues, and incarnates love, which is the virtue most central to the Eucharist. *The Scepter of Joseph* emphasizes bread as needed to feed the spiritually hungry, as well as pointing up the mysteriousness of God's working in history. *The Divine Narcissus* centers on the meaning of Christ's sacrificial death as historical basis for the Eucharist.<sup>421</sup>

The study and constant meditation on the Eucharist finds fertile terrain not only in the realm of Sor Juana's theological studies but also in the larger scope of her intellectual life. She moves the sacrament out of a strictly hermeneutical analysis and explores its possible meanings

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<sup>421</sup> Pamela Kirk, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Religion, Art, and Feminism* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1998), 39-40.



and applications in the socio-political reality she experienced in her life, gender, and geographical location.

The following pages will look at the *loa* that precedes *El divino Narciso* to demonstrate the subtle arguments Sor Juana makes for a universal notion of the Eucharistic sacrament, as well as her stance in defense of the indigenous people's rights and humanity. In this *loa* she moves past the common notion that every similarity between Christianity and indigenous religions was a reflection of Satan's attempt to challenge God and establish a parallel evil kingdom among the indigenous people in opposition to that of the Lord in the Christian world. This opinion had been popularized by Jesuit missionary José de Acosta who explains in his 1590 *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* how "lo que nuestro Dios con sabiduría ordena para su culto y honra y para bien y salud del hombre, procura el demonio imitarlo y pervertirlo, para ser él honrado y el hombre más condenado."<sup>422</sup> Sor Juana acknowledges the similarities between Christian and indigenous rites and incites the indigenous characters of the *loa* to abandon "el culto profano / A que el Demonio os incita," but instead of rejecting autochthonous religiosity as paganism and merely devilish adulteration of the true religion, she suggests the possibility of a common, if primitive, notion of the Eucharist that is shared also by the populations the Spanish conquest had 'discovered'.<sup>423</sup> In so doing, she fully uses that theatrical medium to humanize the indigenous

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<sup>422</sup> "What our Lord orders for his worship and honor, and for the well being and health of mankind, the devil tries to imitate and pervert in order to be worshipped himself and cause man's damnation." Acosta explains his theories more clearly when he addresses the social and religious customs of the indigenous he had observed in his missionary tenure: "Apenas hay cosa instituida por Jesucristo, nuestro Dios y señor, en su ley evangélica, que en alguna manera no la haya el demonio sofisticado y pasado a su gentilidad; como echará de ver quien advirtiere en lo que por ciertas relaciones tenemos sabido de los ritos y ceremonias de los indios, de que vamos a tratar en este libro." ("There is hardly anything that Jesus our Lord has instituted in his evangelical law that the devil has not in some way contaminated and passed onto his subjects, as the reader will see in some of the accounts of rites and ceremonies of the Indians dealt with in this book.") José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/09252730874681169643379/Index.htm>

<sup>423</sup> "...the profane cult to which the devil pushes on you." Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras Completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Autos y Loas*. Vol. III, 7. Besides José de Acosta, Sor Juana might have heard about Diego Durán's *Historia de las Indias de Nueva España*, which also interpreted analogies between Christianity and paganism as a

inhabitants of Mexico by portraying their misunderstood but innate call to Christianity. Sor Juana recognizes the natives' humanity and their similarities to the Europeans by identifying the epistemological analogies in their cults. Marie-Cécile Bennasy-Berling argues that Sor Juana's pivotal shift establishes a positive analogy between western and Amerindian population and leads to the transmutation from one religion to the other.<sup>424</sup> The author's theory stems out of the notion that God had manifested himself to the Amerindians, and that religious and cultural similarities between the primitives of the New World and the civilized Europeans bore witness to God's preparing "the arrival of his word."<sup>425</sup>

The *loa* to *El divino Narciso* depicts the first encounter between the Spaniards and the Aztecs, and it starts with Occident (Occidente) and America, a couple dancing the *ticotín*, a stylized dance they perform in elaborate traditional pre-Hispanic costumes. When the music stops, they give thanks to the god Huitzilopochtli for protecting their kingdom and harvest, and introduce the audience to the need of human sacrifice to please the god and assure his protection.<sup>426</sup> In scene 2, Religion (Religión) and Zeal (Celo), the couple representing the Spanish conquistadores, come on stage to convert the Aztecs but are invited to leave if they want their lives spared. Religion attempts to mediate between the natives, who firmly refuse to abandon their rites, and Zeal, who is portrayed as rash and all too eager to battle. Religion starts by saying to the Amerindian couple "Dejad el culto profano / A que el Demonio os incita. / ¡Abrid los ojos! Seguid / La verdadera Doctrina / Que mi amor os persüade," but when they

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well hatched plan of the devil. See Margo Glantz, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: ¿Hagiografía o autobiografía?* (Mexico: Editorial Grijalbo, 1995), 151.

<sup>424</sup> Marie-Cécile Bennasy-Berling, *Humanisme et Religion chez Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982), 321.

<sup>425</sup> Carlos Jáuregui, "Cannibalism, the Eucharist, and Criollo Subjects." Ralph Bauer and José Antonio Mazzotti, *Creole Subjects in the Colonial Americas: Empires, Texts, Identities* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press). Forthcoming.

<sup>426</sup> Huitzilopochtli was the principal god of the Aztec cosmology. He was the patron of Tenochtitlan, and the god of the sun, death, war, and natural events.

reconfirm their faith in Huitzilopochtli and ask who she is, Religion is quick to reply “Soy la Religión Cristiana, / Que intento que tus Provincias / Se reduzcan a mi culto.”<sup>427</sup> Zeal echoes the same aggressive threat Religion has made but he justifies it as a direct consequence of the Indians’ refusal of Christianity:

El Celo soy. ¿Qué te admira?  
Que, cuando a la Religión  
Desprecian tus demasías,  
Entrará el Celo a vengarla  
Castigando tu osadía.  
Ministro de Dios soy, que  
Viendo que tus tiranías  
Han llegado ya a los sumo,  
Cansado de ver que vivas  
Tantos años entre errores,  
A castigarte me envía.”<sup>428</sup>

According to Zeal, the war is not an act of aggression but one of permissible, even encouraged, liberation. This pivotal scene represents and pokes fun at the *Requerimiento*, the document the Spaniards read to the indigenous populations before waging war against them. Compiled by jurist Juan López de Palacios Rubios around 1513, this text addresses, in Spanish, topics such as the creation of Adam and Eve, Saint Peter as the first pope, the role of the Spanish monarchy and the Church in the colonies. It ends with the order to the Amerindians to submit to the king of Spain and accept Catholicism as their new religion if they want to be spared their lives. Considering that the Indians could not understand Spanish, and that, even with the help of an interpreter, they were unlikely to simply abandon their religious beliefs, the only effect of

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<sup>427</sup> “Abandon your profane cults which the devil has bestowed upon you! Open up your eyes to the truth! Feel the warmth of my love!” “I am the Christian Religion! Your domain shall be ours!” Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras Completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Autos y Loas*. Vol. III, 7-8.

<sup>428</sup> “I am Zeal! And since your excesses take you to reject Religion, I shall punish your audacity as His avenger. I am a minister of God, who, having seen your tyrannical ways have reached their apex, and tired of watching you live in your errors, has sent me to punish you.” Ibid, 8-9.

reading the *Requerimiento* was to assure the conquistadores that the war was ‘justified’ by either the reluctance of the natives to accept the Christian God, or by their aggressive behavior.<sup>429</sup> At the end of the scene, a war ensues and the Indians are defeated by the more sophisticated and lethal weaponry of the Spaniards.<sup>430</sup> In the following scene, Religion has to mediate again in order to prevent Zeal from murdering all the Indians.<sup>431</sup> However, even though defeated and powerless, the Aztecs refuse to convert: “Y así, aunque cautivo gima, / ¡No me podrás impedir / Que acá, en mi corazón, diga / Que venero al gran Dios de las Semillas!”<sup>432</sup> In scene 4, Religion explains the presence and visibility of God in the Holy Host consumed during the sacrament of the Communion. She draws on the similarities between Christ and Huitzilopochtli whose bodies are consumed by a community of faithful worshippers, but stresses the transition from the factual flesh and blood to the figurative Host and wine of the Eucharist.

Ya he dicho que es Su infinita  
 Majestad, inmaterial;  
 Mas Su humanidad bendita,  
 Puesta incrüenta en el santo  
 Sacrificio de la Misa,  
 En cándidos accidentes,  
 Se vale de las semillas  
 Del trigo, el cual se convierte  
 En su Carne y Sangre misma;  
 Y Su Sangre, que en el Cáliz  
 Está, es Sangre que ofrecida

<sup>429</sup> Héctor Díaz Polanco, trans. Lucia Rayas, *Indigenous People in Latin America: The Quest for Self-Determination* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 26.

<sup>430</sup> The author’s criticism of the violence of the Spanish conquest surfaces again in the *loa* of *El cetro de José*, where Idolatría (Idolatry) reproaches Faith saying “introdujiste tirana / Tu dominio in mis Imperios, / Predicando la Cristiana / Ley, a cuyo fin te abrieron / Violenta senda las armas.” (“You tyrant forced your will upon my dominions with the violence of your weapons, while preaching the Christian law.” Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras Completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Autos y Loas*, 192.

<sup>431</sup> “Sí, porque haberla vencido / Le tocó a tu valentía, / Pero a mi piedad le toca / El conservarle la vida ... Cese tu justicia, / Celos; no les des la muerte: / Que no quiere mi benigna / Condición, que mueran, sino / Que se conviertan y vivan.” (“Your valor defeated her but my piety will spare her life .... Stop your justice, Zeal! Do not kill them. I do not want them to perish, but only to be converted and live.” Ibid, 11-12.

<sup>432</sup> “Even in captivity, you will never succeed in preventing me from expressing that here in my heart I will always adore the God of Seeds.” Ibid, 12.

En el Ara de la Cruz,  
Inocente, pura y limpia,  
fue la Redención del Mundo.<sup>433</sup>

As America and Occident appear to remain uncertain whether to convert to the new religion or not, Religion decides to prove the superiority of the Catholic God by using the allegories and metaphors of a play, *El divino Narciso*, which identifies the character of Narcissus with that of Jesus Christ, and exemplifies the Christian doctrine in an appealing and convincing way.

Sor Juana constructs the story of Huitzilopochtli as conceptually similar to the ritual consumption of Christ's flesh and blood during the sacrament of the Eucharist. Most likely Sor Juana had read Juan de Torquemada's *Monarquía indiana*, the only chronicle authorized in Mexico during her lifetime, and she knew that the Aztec worshipped Huitzilopochtli as the *dios de la semillas*, the god of seeds, and that to secure their harvest they used to make a statue out of human blood and seeds representing the god.<sup>434</sup> At the end of a sacred ceremony that took place over several days, the statue of the god was ritually broken and the pieces were eaten. In the *loa* to *El divino Narciso*, Sor Juana is exploring the similarities between the gruesome Aztec rites in which prisoners captured during flower wars were slaughtered to appease the gods, and the Christian Eucharist that renews the sacrifice of Jesus through the eating of his symbolical body. While the ceremony of the *dios comido* (eaten god) contained real human blood and was made

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<sup>433</sup> "I have already explained that his infinite majesty is invisible. His blessed humanity is always present in the sacred offer of the mass which uses the seeds of grain, which transforms itself in his flesh and blood. His blood which is present in the glass is the blood that was offered on the altar of the cross, innocent, pure, and clean for the redemption of the world." Ibid., 16.

<sup>434</sup> Margo Glantz maintains that Hernan Cortés was the first to describe the ceremony of the *dios comido* in his *Cartas de relación*, which were forbidden in Spain in 1527. Glantz, 163. Maria Perez is cautiously positive in identifying the *dios de las semillas* with Huitzilopochtli, "Suponemos que el Dios de la semilla al que se refiere Sor Juana es el dios Huitzilopochtli y no solamente por lo establecido por el professor Méndez Plancarte, sino porque Sor Juana aclare que, además de ser el 'mayor' es el 'que limpia de pecado y después se hace Manjar', y esto coincide con la explicación que nos han dejado acerca de este ídolo algunos cronistas." ("We suppose that the God of Seeds that Sor Juana talks about is the god Huitzilopochtli;. This is not only because of what professor Plancarte has said but also because Sor Juana declares that he was 'the most important', and 'the one who takes away sins and is eaten, which corresponds with the stories related by some chroniclers about this idol.") Maria Perez, *Lo Americano en el teatro de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (New York: Eliseo Torres & Sons, 1975), 228.

possible by actual sacrifices, the Eucharist shifts the focus of the rite from the sacrificial to the sacramental. The holy host guarantees transcendence without the necessity for continuous sacrifices. This is the very same idea that Sor Juana had elaborated only a few years earlier in *El mártir del sacramento* when she had asserted the redundancy of literal and cruel deaths by championing the Eucharist over the material death of Christ.

The notion of transubstantiation that came out of the Council of Trent reinforced the actual presence of Christ's flesh and blood in the Holy Host and wine used during the Communion, thus closely analogizing the ritual for the god Huitzilopochtli in its aspects of cannibalism and theophagia.<sup>435</sup> However, while these ceremonial aspects are retained in the Eucharist, the bloodletting is completely missing because Christ's sacrifice happened once, and for all men. As the transubstantiation changes the bread and the wine into the 'substance' of Christ's flesh and blood anytime a priest officiate mass, there is no further need of sacrificial bloodletting, whether it be among the inhabitants of Mexico or in the devotional aspirations and missionary vocation of the Society of Jesus.

It is interesting to notice that the substitution of Huitzilopochtli's multiple human sacrifices with Christ's single sacrifice reactivates the memory of a real episode of material substitution that happened during the conquest of Mexico. In the aftermath of the fall of the Aztec city of Tenochtitlan and the defeat of Moctezuma in the 1520s, Hernán Cortéz replaced the stone image of Huitzilopochtli, which featured predominantly in the capital city's temple, with an image of the Virgin and a cross.<sup>436</sup> More than a hundred and fifty years later, Sor Juana revisits that historical episode in order to suggest a different outcome. Her *loa* does not represent

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<sup>435</sup> The history of Catholic transubstantiation is complex and fascinating. It was adopted by the Church in the IV Council of the Lateran in 1215, was modified in the Council of Lyon in 1274, and again in the XIII session of the Council of Trent (1545-1563).

<sup>436</sup> Burkholder, Mark – Johnson, Lyman, *Colonial Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 49.

a mere exchange of one object of worship for another, but a continuation, or an evolution, from an archaic and underdeveloped idea of literal sacrifice to the symbolical Eucharist. The Aztecs in Sor Juana's *loa* may have a confused and quite literal notion of the Eucharist, but they understand the transcendent power of forgiveness and redemption associated with the eating of the body of Huitzilopochtli, and they are more receptive to Christianity because of this very reason.

There is more to the narrative thread offered by the *dios comido* than a mere mirroring of the Christian Eucharist among pre-Hispanic cultures. The implications of having the Indians share with the Spaniards the communion, or even the idea of depicting them as willing and able to understand the theological underpinnings of the Eucharistic sacrament, is a way for Sor Juana to address the issue of Indian humanity which had been brought up publicly a century earlier by the vitriolic exchanges between Bartolomé de las Casa and Louis de Sepúlveda. While Sor Juana would never think of opposing the colonial order in its forced conversion of the Indians, she makes sure that the natives are represented in a positive light. While she depicts the Indians as stuck in a state of nature, a condition that motivates their barbaric behavior, she also portrays them as peaceful people, who respond with violence only after they are attacked by Zeal. They speak in perfect Spanish without any speech or pronunciation problems that might suggest a radical difference. Sor Juana characterizes them as endowed with an inquisitive and intelligent nature that leads them to ask poignant questions about theological matters and reason with Religion. They are civil, good-natured, reasonable, and honorable. Furthermore, by being malleable to the evangelical message, the Indians are claiming their place within Spanish Christendom not as subalterns imprisoned in their otherness, but as individuals able to change and better themselves. The representation of the natives in Sor Juana's *loa* for *El divino Narciso*

is very different from the ones available on the seventeenth century stages, where most playwrights patronized the Amerindians and often represented them as godless and bloodthirsty.

Accounts of the indigenous life in the *colonias* filtered through the writing of Jesuit priests, travelers, and illustrious residents, and inevitably influenced the theatre. Between 1598 and 1603, Lope de Vega wrote *El Nuevo mundo descubierto por Cristóbal Colón*, a play inspired by Lopez de Gomara's chronicles. Here he interprets the proselytization and conversion of the American population as a righteous act of piety and love. Just like Sor Juana's *loa*, Lope's play deals with the first encounter between Indians and western people. However, even though Lope de Vega denounces the despicable greed that inspired the Spaniards, his treatment of the Indians does not invite any positive reading. The same happens with Vélez de Guevara's *Vertudes vencen señales*, a play that explores the dangers associated with dark-skinned people, associates blackness with monstrosity, and makes a quite obvious statement about the risks of *mestizaje*, and the corruption of the purity of blood. Even Pedro Calderon de la Barca, the most famous dramatist of Spain's Golden Age, doesn't seem to say anything positive about the Indians. In his 1651 *La aurora en Copacabana*, Calderon does not explore at all the disastrous consequences the conquest had for the indigenous populations nor the responsibility of the Spaniards. He is inspired by religious fervor, and driven by his desire to illustrate the outcome of the conversion of the Amerindians. Calderon intends to explore the relationship between man and God at the expense of any historical accuracy. He does not deal with the inconvenient topic of the military conquest, nor with the massacres that destroyed the Amerindians almost entirely. Signals and facial expressions are used for communication between the two groups in the first two acts, however in act III, after 50 years have passed, they all speak Spanish. The Indians in Calderon's play are either demonized, as in the case of *Idolatria* who proposes the return to human sacrifice



throughout the play, or infantilized, as in the case of Yupangui, an Indian who appear to have internalized one of European stereotypes: the Indians are innocent and authentic because they're unspoiled by contacts with other cultures, but they are also a bit dumb.<sup>437</sup>

Sor Juana's depiction of the native inhabitants of Mexico is far more positive than that of her famous fellow playwrights on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. While all these white European men experience and portray the encounter with the 'other' through the perspective of difference, which inevitably translates into hierarchical relationships between superior/inferior, dominant/subaltern, Sor Juana has a different viewpoint on the subject because she is a *criolla* born and raised in Mexico, therefore closer to the living reality of the indigenous people and possibly more understanding of them. Although the topic of religious equality is not part of Sor Juana's vocabulary, as she believed that Christianity was the only true religion, in the *loa* to *El divino Narciso* she investigates the possibility of equality of the races and addresses the inescapable assimilation of the least developed group to the more developed one.<sup>438</sup> While it is undisputable, as Jorge Larrain claims, that "both attitudes rest on egocentrism, on the identification of the values of the colonial power with universal values, which must prevail," it is also true that Sor Juana's outlook on the indigenous population of Mexico is positive and accounts for their inherent religiosity and humanity, as well as for their peculiar intelligence, and fast capacity for adapting to the western civilization. It is by granting them these qualities that Sor Juana challenges the complete dispossession of the autochthonous people of Mexico and

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<sup>437</sup> For a more detailed account of Calderon, de Guevara, and Lope de Vega's plays see Friedman, Edward- Miller, Donald (eds.) *A Society on Stage: Essays on Spanish Golden Age Drama* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 1998).

<sup>438</sup> Todorov, T, *La conquista de América, el problema del otro* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 1989), 50.

defies the greedy conquistadores who were after the prospect of gaining land, slaves, gold, and silver.<sup>439</sup>

Unlike Spanish playwrights, who portrayed Mexican autochthonous populations as either primitive savages or innocent imbeciles, she displays concern for their future and respect for their resilience. In the *loa* to *San Hermenegildo*, Sor Juana retraces that encounter with the arrival of Columbus in the Americas and with the beginning of the violent colonization of the indigenous people.<sup>440</sup> In the *loa* to *El divino Narciso*, she wishes a peaceful solution to that first inevitable encounter. Her description of the cultural ‘others’ is full of dignity and honest interest. Although she agreed with the spiritual mission of the colonizers, she does not justify the destructive behavior and the cruelty of the Spaniards.

At the end of the *loa* for *El divino Narciso*, Zeal asks Religion where she is going to stage her play and Religion replies by saying “En la coronada Villa / De Madrid, que es de la Fe / El centro, y la regia Silla / De sus Católicos Reyes, / A quien debieron las Indias / Las luces del Evangelio / Que en el Occidente brillan.”<sup>441</sup> When Zealot objects that it might be inappropriate that a play written in Mexico be represented in Madrid, Religion replies that “Con que su obra, aunque sea / Rústica y poco pulida, / de la obediencia es efecto, no parto de la osadía.”<sup>442</sup> Sor Juana’s *captatio benevolentiae* for her unpolished play as unworthy of the Spanish capital, and her envisioning the monarch as imparting light and truth to the Indians were essential and canonical components of every play, especially plays written by women. These remarks should

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<sup>439</sup> Jorge Larrain, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 51.

<sup>440</sup> America expresses herself in truly baroque language when she says “Qué rayos el cielo vibra / contra mí? Qué fieros globos / de plomo ardiente graniza? / Qué Centauros monstruosos / Contra mis gentes militan.” (“What rays of light does the sky launch against me? What destructive globes of hot plumb does it throw? What monstrous Centaurs attack my people?”) See also Manuel Antonio Arango, *Contribución al estudio de la obra dramática de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 130-131.

<sup>441</sup> “In the great location of Madrid, the center of faith and the royal place of its Catholic kings, to whom the Indians and Occident owe the evangelical light.” Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras Completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Autos y Loas*. Vol. III., 19.

<sup>442</sup> It does not matter if the work is unsophisticated and unpolished, as long as it accomplishes its purpose.” Ibid, 19.

not, however, deflect attention from what is truly important in the passages mentioned above: the fact that this play is meant to be staged in Spain, in the city of residence of the king, in the place where the colonial power originates. It is still an object of dispute whether this *loa* and its *auto* were ever produced in Spain, but what matters is that Sor Juana meant for them to be seen in Spain. What is the “purpose” that Religion wants to accomplish? Why do the Indian characters America and Occident need to go to Madrid? What is the lesson they are going to teach and learn once they arrive in Europe? Sor Juana appears to be haunted by these questions to the point of inscribing some of them in the play itself just to have the chance to answer them. When Zeal asks Religion whether it is appropriate for something written in Mexico to be staged in Madrid (“¿Pues no ves la impropriedad / De que en Méjico se escriba / Y en Madrid se represente?”) she replies with a question herself “¿Pues es cosa nunca vista / Que se haga una cosa en una / Parte, porque en otra sirva?”<sup>443</sup> Besides Religion’s annoyance at the question posed by Zeal, something else is worth noticing: the idea that *El divino Narciso* serves a purpose and a specific function in Spain. While this statement could simply refer to the celebration of the Eucharist, it is obvious that Zeal’s concerns point not to the discussion of the sacrament but to the presence of the Indians. In fact, he elaborates by saying “Pues díme, Religión, ya / Que a eso le diste salida, / ¿Cómo salvas la objeción / De que introduces las Indias, / Y a Madrid quieres llevarlas?”<sup>444</sup> The answer of Religion emphasizes the celebration of the Eucharist and downplays the role of the indigenous characters as “unos abstractos, que pintan / Lo que se intenta decir” (“abstractions that depict what the play intends to say.”)<sup>445</sup> Nevertheless, an attentive reading of the play shows Occident and America as fully human and worthy as the Spaniards. Far from being mere

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<sup>443</sup> “Has it never been heard that something made in one place might be useful somewhere else?” Ibid, 19.

<sup>444</sup> “Well, Religion, since you started this all thing, why don’t you answer me a question: how do you overcome the objection that you put on stage the Americas and want to take them to Madrid?” Ibid, 20.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid, 20.

allegories, they appear strongly defined in their sentiments, beliefs, and aspiration. They put a human face on the colonial Indians that Spanish people knew mainly through the accounts of chroniclers and missionaries. Sor Juana has strong faith in the capacity of the motherland to understand her Mexican *auto* and explains that “que a especies intelectivas / Ni habrá distancias que estorben / Ni mares que les impidan.”<sup>446</sup>

The transatlantic journey of Sor Juana’s work to Spain is going to place the ‘indigenous other’ at the very center of Catholic Europe and will make him visible as a stage character. The *mexicanidad* of the play, embodied by its natives, serves the double purpose of showing the indigenous as endowed with a humanity and religiosity similar to that of the Spaniards, and denouncing the abuses that took place during the conquest. Sor Juana is calling for another cultural encounter, a peaceful one, in which the roles are reversed and the Indians are traveling to Europe in order to ‘discover’ the Spanish people and bridge the dichotomies of self/other created by the colonial power. The play that is about to start at the end of the *loa* is as much for the Indians’ benefit as it is for the Spaniards’. It is for this reason that Zeal says that “Siendo así, a los Reales Pies, / En quien Dos Mundos se cifran, / Pidamos perdón postrados”<sup>447</sup> In Sor Juana’s understanding of the conquest, there is no alternative to the colonization and conversion of the Amerindians, but she makes a powerful case for their humanity and right to live, and, ultimately, allows them to perorate their own case as stage characters in front of the monarchs.

The analysis of the *loa* of *El divino Narciso* confirms Sor Juana’s fascination with the Eucharistic sacrament, and helps frame the discussion about *El mártir del sacramento* in more general terms. The author approached the Hermenegildo trope to undo the Jesuit hero of some of

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<sup>446</sup> “Because for intellectual species there is no distance that will be an obstacle, nor sea that will be a barrier.” Ibid, 20.

<sup>447</sup> “Knowing the meaning of the truth, let us kneel and ask for forgiveness at the royal feet where two worlds come together.” Ibid, 20.

his more mystical and devotional characteristics, mainly his desire for death and annihilation in God. The Eucharist becomes the apt medium to undermine the morbidity of the hero's quest, because it highlights the abstractness of ritual over the literality of the sacrifice. However, Sor Juana's use and intellectual manipulation of the sacrament go beyond the mere boundaries of theology and take on the stereotypical colonial portrayals of the 'other' to disprove cultural assumptions about Amerindians' identity and women's role in society.

#### **5.1.6 Hermenegildo and Sor Juana's theological orthodoxy**

In *El mártir del sacramento*, Sor Juana emphasizes the sacramental potential of the Hermenegildo trope and downplays the dogma of the Trinity, which was the historical trigger of the martyr's rebellion against Leovigildo. Discussing the significance of the Eucharist allowed Sor Juana to transcend the sacrificial bent with which the Jesuits had charged the martyr's narrative and to refocus the trope towards the religious openness and inclusiveness of the New Testament. In her play, Christ's establishment of the Eucharist obliterates the necessity for expiatory sacrifice of the Mosaic Law through the renewable sacrifice of Christ's own flesh and blood during mass. This shift is one of great importance because it stresses the message of reconciliation and love of the gospels, and it moves away from the culture of pain and suffering that sustained the political and rhetorical agenda of the Society of Jesus, especially their ongoing work in the missions and their recruiting of the new missionaries.

The potential of the Eucharist to forestall the sacrificial burden has become a topic of new interest in contemporary theological studies. William T. Cavanaugh's *Torture and*

*Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* probes the significance of the sacrament in resisting the brutal violence of state-administered torture, and connects it to movements of spiritual and ideological resistance against the military dictatorship of Pinochet in Chile between 1973 and 1990. Cavanaugh interprets torture as “an anti-liturgy, a drama in which the state realizes omnipotence on the bodies of others,” and contrasts it to the Eucharist in which the only body that is worthy as sacrifice is that of Christ.<sup>448</sup> He argues that the Eucharistic sacrament subtracts the pain witnessed in torture from its secrecy and incommunicability by turning it into a public ceremony of sharing and atoning:

...Jesus’ pain is appropriated by others to redeem, not increase, suffering. Jesus’ suffering is redemptive for the entire world. His one unrepeatable sacrifice, His death by torture on the cross, serves to abolish other blood sacrifices, once and for all. We do not find other bodies to torture and sacrifice, but only remember in the Eucharist the one sacrifice which takes away the world’s pain.<sup>449</sup>

Cavanaugh’s argument is relevant to Sor Juana’s ideological position in *El mártir del sacramento* because both writers point to the transcending potential of the sacramental symbol, as well as to its capacity to socialize individual physical pain into collective spiritual rebirth. Through the highly ritualized and symbolic consumption of Christ’s flesh and blood, the Eucharist establishes a new covenant between man and God. Not only is this new relationship based on forgiveness of man’s sins, it is also open to everybody who is willing to accept it, regardless of his nationality, ethnicity, and race. The extension of the Eucharist to non-Jewish people in the New Testament mirrors Sor Juana’s placing of the Eucharistic sacrament at the

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<sup>448</sup> William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 279.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

center of the lives of the indigenous people of Mexico. For the author, the sacrament reconciles man with God, as well as man with man, by creating a community of faith.

Sor Juana's interest for the Eucharist reflects also her deep preoccupation for the theological purity of this sacrament, which had come under the attack of the Protestant Reformation. Luther opposed the notion of transubstantiation, the presence of Christ's flesh and blood in the Holy Host and wine, and replaced it with the mere presence of the Holy Spirit. He also favored the communal sharing of the wine during the Communion, a fact that had always encountered resistance within the Catholic Church. These were issues of great weight in the debates that ensued during and after the Council of Trent because they brought under discussion the role of the Church, its true significance in embodying Christianity, and its function as representative of God's will. The Council of Trent established the Eucharist as the true foundation of a Christian life because it allowed the continuous forgiveness of man's sins.<sup>450</sup> Unlike the Protestants who believed the significance of the Communion comes to life through the faith of the believer, the Catholic Church stressed the unequivocal relevance of the Eucharist as a purifying ritual where the flesh and blood of Christ perpetually renewed the mystery and sacrifice of Christ's Incarnation.<sup>451</sup>

By presenting the saint as "el mártir solo del Sacramento" ("the only martyr of the sacrament,") Sor Juana places the Eucharist as the structuring narrative of the Hermenegildo

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<sup>450</sup> The scholarship about the Eucharist is extremely vast and of unequal value. The following is a list of books that discuss the Catholic sacrament and address the Protestant understanding of it: Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993); Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken: The Calvinist Doctrine of the Eucharist and the Symbolization of Power in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988).

<sup>451</sup> The Church was also adamant in celebrating and memorializing the sacrament in the Christian calendar. In 1264, Pope Urban IV established the Feast of Corpus Christi with the papal bull *Transiturus*; his successor, Pope Clement IV, reaffirmed the importance of celebrating this festivity at the General Council of Vienna in 1311, and so did Pope John XXII after him.

trope.<sup>452</sup> The author shares the notion of the Eucharist as foundational to the doctrinal practice of all Christians and, consequently, she shapes her Hermenegildo as a valiant supporter of the sacrament as well as of the role of the Church in administering it. *El mártir del sacramento* highlights the value of the Eucharist by demonstrating that salvation is possible only through it. The sacrament features predominantly at the end of the play, where Hermenegildo declines it because it is offered by a heretic priest. In this case, Sor Juana is willing to incur in a doctrinal error to stress the importance of theological purity. After all, how could Hermenegildo receive the symbol of Christ's physical presence from an Arian who believed that Christ was a generated creature who did not partake of God's essence? In Sor Juana the dogma of the Trinity and the sacrament of the Eucharist appear to be entwined in the same theological dispute, that of Christ's essence and presence. When transposed to the seventeenth century, Hermenegildo's rejection of the Arian Communion demonstrated the open refusal of Protestant revision of the Eucharist as a condemnable heresy. Hermenegildo is uncompromising when it comes to accepting and defending Catholic sacraments and dogmas. In Sor Juana's portrayal of his martyrdom, one can see the unbending determination of the author to guard the theological truths of the Church.

Sor Juana is so adamant about upholding and defending Catholicism that she does not shy away from one of the more troubling ideas of the Society of Jesus, that concerning the legitimate deposition of a monarch and regicide. In fact, she addresses the topic of Hermenegildo's war against Leovigildo head on through the words of Recaredo in scene 16. Here Recaredo meets Hermenegildo after the defeat of his troops and he calls his rebellion unjustified because Leovigildo is not a tyrant:

Pues si de ella te apartó  
De la Religión el celo,

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<sup>452</sup> Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, 182.



Para moverle la guerra  
No fué bastante pretexto:  
Pues la diversidad sola  
De ella (cuando no hay exceso  
de tiranía) no basta  
a dar razón ni derecho  
a los rebeldes, y bien  
sabes que mi Padre en eso  
no ha puesto violencia, pues  
ha permitido en sus Reinos  
libre el uso de la tuya;  
y si tú lo irritas, temo  
que antes con eso la dañás,  
pues lo haces romper el sello  
a perseguirla ...<sup>453</sup>

The author uses a direct quotation from Jesuit Juan de Mariana's chronicle ("¿que razón pudo ser bastante para tomar las armas contra tu Padre?") to anticipate and respond to the objection that Hermenegildo was rash in waging war.<sup>454</sup> Recaredo defends his father based on his supposedly peaceful behavior, however, the following scene proves his assessment completely wrong as Leovigildo throws Hermenegildo in prison and refuses to listen to Recaredo's pleas for forgiveness. Leovigildo's violent and unreasonable attitude echoes also in the words of Hermenegildo who mentions in scene 3 the *acosados* lived by the Spanish Catholics and "la sangrienta matanza / del lobo, que el voraz diente / tiña en inocente grana."<sup>455</sup>

While Sor Juana's protagonist is not as interested in the topic of regicide as the earlier Jesuit incarnations of the hero, he believes firmly in the superiority of the Pope over the king and

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<sup>453</sup> "If the zeal of your religion pushed you to disobey him [Leovigildo] and to wage war against him, that was not a good enough reason. Having a different religion is not sufficient when there is not an excess of tyranny, and you know well that my father used no violence and allowed the free expression of your religion in his kingdom. But if you upset him, I fear that you might cause damage to your religion because he might decide to persecute it..." Ibid., 166.

<sup>454</sup> "What reason was good enough to justify taking the arms against your father?" Juan de Mariana, *Crónica de España*, book V, chapter 12, cited in *Autos sacramentales de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, edited by Alfonso Méndez Plancarte (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1970), 205.

<sup>455</sup> "...the bloody massacre carried out by the wolf that sinks his voracious teeth in innocent blood." Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, *Obras completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, 125.

is forthright about the limits of his loyalty to his father. Conversing with the ambassador Geserico, he says “que en todo lo que no vaya / Contra la Fe que profeso, / Siempre me hallará a sus plantas,”<sup>456</sup> and a few pages later emphasizes the same position towards Leovigildo:

...que a ser  
Intereses temporales,  
Como tú juzgas, no sólo  
Cedieran mis humildades  
A mi padre lo que era suyo;  
Mas si yo pudiera darle,  
Para ensanchar su corona,  
Dominio en las cuatro partes  
Del orbe, se las rindiera;  
Mas llegando a penetrarse  
Con punto de religión,  
No es de mi arbitrio, pues parte  
Es Dios en ella; ...<sup>457</sup>

Sor Juana is as fully committed to defending Catholicism as she is to upholding the humanitarian and conciliatory significance of the Eucharist. Her decision to stress the Eucharist as the sacrament that brings man closer to the divinity comes with the inherent imperative to defend it from heretical attacks. While this might appear contradictory, it is important to stress that she was working not only in a Catholic institution and under the constant scrutiny of her superiors, but also within the strict boundaries and expectations of devotional theatre. Furthermore, in spite of her documented disagreements with the religious establishment, Sor Juana shared the same ideological positions as the Catholic Church about what constituted doctrinal accepted views.

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<sup>456</sup> “In all things that do not go against my religion, I will always bow at his feet.” Ibid., 128.

<sup>457</sup> As you know, if it was a matter of state business I would give back to my father what is his and even more to expand his kingdom to the four corners of the world. However, since religion is involved, it is not up to me to decide because God is concerned.” Ibid., 135.

Sor Juana's choice of the *auto sacramental*, a genre that develops within the "seno mismo de la Liturgia católica" ("the very heart of Catholic liturgy") has a twofold purpose of maintaining the focus on the theological and sacramental essence of the Hermenegildo trope and avoiding mere literary ambitions. Alfonso Méndez Plancarte rightly noted that the play selects and uses the historical data of Hermenegildo's martyrdom "con finísimo instinto escénico, ordenados en una arquitectura simple y robusta," and he even considers the value of Sor Juana's dramatic production superior to that of Lope de Vega.<sup>458</sup> Nevertheless, Sor Juana subordinates all literary and artistic goals to her aspiration to shape *El mártir del sacramento* into a solid theological response against the threats of heresy and religious heterodoxy. Her defense of Catholicism is what sets *El mártir del sacramento* apart from the Italian version of the Hermenegildo trope written by Emanuele Teasuro. Sor Juana's religious convictions are stronger than those found in Teasuro's *Ermegildo*, a play that underplays the theological message in order to establish a model for modern religious tragedy and settles into a dangerous secular ambiguity. Sor Juana's devotional world appears to be more similar to that of Sforza Pallavicino, as they both focus on the theological message of the Hermenegildo trope without embracing fully the vitriolic content of the Society of Jesus political agenda. However, Pallavicino speaks from the sacrificial point of view of the Society of Jesus by placing conspicuous emphasis on Hermenegildo's sufferings and death. Moreover, his *Ermegildo* is burdened by its strictly codified Aristotelian rules, its rejection of spectacle, and its literary and stylistic agendas, while

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<sup>458</sup> "...with refined scenic instinct, ordered [the historical material] in a simple yet robust architecture." Ibid., LXXVIII.

*El mártir del sacramento* thrives in the inherent theatricality of the *auto sacramental* genre and it is bolder in its literary statements.<sup>459</sup>

*El mártir del sacramento* exhausts and fulfills the epistemological trajectory of the Hermenegildo theatrical trope that had begun in Europe a century earlier. Although there are a number of Hermenegildo plays written and staged in the eighteenth century, it is with Sor Juana's 1692 *auto sacramental* that this theatrical trope reaches theological and rhetorical maturity. Sor Juana aptly manages to decentralize the focus of the trope from Spain to Mexico, to deconstruct the Jesuits' political and religious agenda, and balance literary and devotional aspirations, while keeping a strong emphasis on theological discourse as the principal advocate and protector of Catholic orthodoxy. The fact that she achieved those things as a woman and a Creole is a testament to her determination and resilience as it is an authentication of her artistic and intellectual genius.

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<sup>459</sup> For a detailed analysis of Sor Juana's style in *El mártir del sacramento*, see Lee. A. Daniel, "Sor Juana's baroque Martyr-Auto, *El mártir del sacramento*, *San Hermenegildo*," *Latin American Theatre Review* 28, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 101-114.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

My interests here are to suggest future possibilities for applying the critical methodology I used in my dissertation and to highlight the necessary work that scholars still need to undertake in order to productively and efficiently engage the study of the religious theatre of the Golden Age.

Hermenegildo continues to fascinate me as both an historical personage and a stage character for his unique ability to adapt and mutate to the different realities in which he appears. There is something unchanging, almost fixed, in the way dramatists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries used the story of the prince and martyr who died for his faith in the 500s to support the Catholic vision of the post-Reformation world. However, there is also something strangely transient and ephemeral in how the details and significations of this story keep on changing in the many dramatic versions existing. This dissertation strives to capture the idiosyncrasies inherent in the fabrication of Hermenegildo as a theatrical trope by highlighting patterns of recurrence and differentiation in his narrative, and to explore his theological and rhetorical tenets by investigating the epistemological trajectory of the character as he moved around Europe and finally embarked on his transatlantic journey to Mexico. My analysis of Hermenegildo as a stage character highlights ideas and ideologies permeating both the intellectual positions of the dramatists as well as the culture of the time in Spain, Italy, and Mexico. The world(s) Hermenegildo came to inhabit between 1590 and 1690 were similarly global, and in more than one way: the free circulation of ideas and international debates defied

national borders; common economic and mercantile interests brought the colonial empires of Spain, France, Portugal, and England to confront each other and at times to reassess their expansionistic aims in their colonies overseas; and the Catholic and Protestant churches created a community of faithful that overcame the linguistic and geographical borders of single states and polarized Europe by engaging many nations into the Thirty Years' War.

There are a number of questions that this dissertation offers for future scholarship: How would the scope of the present study change by the investigation of all the tragedies inspired by San Hermenegildo? How does the Hermenegildo trope change in the eighteenth century? Why did the saint become a propagandistic franchise for the Society of Jesus but not for other religious orders? Did the spectatorship and readership of the Hermenegildo tragedies affect the content and bent of the play text? It would also be extremely productive to probe whether there were other religious figures appearing recurrently on stage and the kinds of symbols and analogies they elicited. Were there other martyrs whom the Society of Jesus chose to charge with symbolical attributes to reflect a devotional notion of the Christian world? If so, did their clerical, geographical, and historical positions affect their points of view and ideological stances?

Theatrical tropes such as that of Hermenegildo provide macro-narratives enabling the researcher to consider common trends and global views across long periods of time and numerous geographical localities, but they also prevent the historian from falling into the trap of easy generalizations by grounding his investigation in the specificities of the single models. This critical methodology relies on the notion that the dramatic work both reflects and interprets the cultural content of a given trope.

This approach can be a valuable tool to study the comedy of the Golden Age in conjunction with the analysis of the global designs contained in the political and religious

discourses of the period. One of the most noteworthy characteristic of this interpretive and theoretical methodology is the fact that it is fully and unapologetically interdisciplinary. Not only does it draw on border theory, colonial and neocolonial studies, and semiotics, it also brings together disciplines as diverse as anthropology, theology, communication studies, literary studies, theatre history and performance studies, and cultural history. While only one of the above-mentioned fields of study should provide the principal critical frame, the collaboration among all of them guarantees a more complete understanding of the Baroque theatre.

The application of new methods of study has the potential to further the study of sixteenth and seventeenth century religious theatre. It is essential, however, to notice that what the scholar needs in order to engage competently the theatrical texts of the period is the full availability of the plays to read. This is even more relevant than critical and interpretive tools because without translated texts it is impossible to elicit the interest of the academic community and to disprove the prejudices that religious theatre is essentially formulaic and unworthy of researching. The case of *Hermenegildo* is exemplary of the necessity of translating martyrs and saints' plays since none of the five dramas I investigated in this dissertation has ever been converted into a language other than the original. This is as unexpected as it is lamentable considering that the tragedies inspired by his martyrdom are so numerous and the 1590 *La tragedia de San Hermenegildo* is considered one of the best examples of Jesuit tragedy.

The lack of English translations is matched only by the deficiency of scholarly investigation of religious drama. With the exclusion of John McCabe's book and a few articles there is not much else available in English about the theatre of the Jesuits. There is also very little academic work available on Lope de Vega's *La mayor corona* and Sor Juana's *El mártir del sacramento*. Historians working on the baroque theatre need to commit to writing about

baroque religious drama and translating it as well, to assure a thorough and systematic comprehension of this type of drama and of the various ways in which it influenced secular theatrical traditions in all of the European countries where it was produced.

Another viable path of study that this dissertation, limited to the years 1590-1690 could not follow, but that would prove rewarding, is the resilience and ever present suggestions of theatre within the Society of Jesus in modern times. Jesuit theatre never regained the centrality it had before the abolishment of the religious order in 1773. When the order was reconstituted in 1814 “a chastened Society of Jesus was less willing to draw attention to itself with public spectacles that drew thousands into town squares.”<sup>460</sup> Nevertheless, theatre never faded away completely. The work of such groups as Teatro la Fragua in Honduras, a group founded in 1979 by Jesuit priest Jack Warner, the remarkable efforts of National Theatre Workshop of the Handicapped founded by Jesuit Rick Curry, and the occasional dramaturgical work of a Jesuit priest on high-profile and professional theatrical productions such as that of Father James Martin on the off-Broadway production of *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* only confirm that the Society of Jesus is still interested in the didactic potential of theatre.<sup>461</sup>

The topic of religious theatre is hardly exhausted. A lot of work needs to be done in translating plays and conducting academic research. By pointing at a few historical and theoretical avenues that can be fruitfully explored by future academic research in both Jesuit and non-Jesuit theatre, this dissertation is a step in the right direction.

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<sup>460</sup> James Martin, *A Jesuit Off-Broadway: Center Stage with Jesus, Judas, and Life's Big Questions* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2007), 124.

<sup>461</sup> I spent the summer of 2007 in El Progreso, Honduras, researching Teatro la Fragua, reading the plays staged by the group during their twenty-eight years of activity, following the company during their tours and observing their theatrical workshops of the gospels. I am now in the process of writing an article based on my observations.



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