

**Horti Hesperidum**  
**Studi di storia del collezionismo**  
**e della storiografia artistica**

Rivista telematica semestrale

LE IMMAGINI VIVE  
coordinamento scientifico di Carmelo Occhipinti

*L'età moderna*  
a cura di Carmelo Occhipinti

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## EDITORIALE

CARMELO OCCHIPINTI

Vide da lontano un busto grandissimo; che da principio immaginò dovere essere di pietra, e a somiglianza degli ermi colossali veduti da lui, molti anni prima, nell'isola di Pasqua. Ma fattosi più da vicino, trovò che era una forma smisurata di donna seduta in terra, col busto ritto, appoggiato il dosso e il gomito a una montagna; e non finta ma viva; di volto mezzo tra bello e terribile, di occhi e di capelli nerissimi; la quale guardavalo fissamente; e stata così un buono spazio senza parlare, all'ultimo gli disse: «Chi sei?»

G. LEOPARDI, *Dialogo della natura e di un islandese*

Poco prima che si chiudesse l'anno 2013, nel sito internet di «Horti Hesperidum» veniva pubblicato il *call for papers* sul tema delle «Immagini vive».

Nonostante la giovane età della rivista – giravano, ancora, i fascicoli delle sole prime due annate –, sorprendentemente vasta fu, da subito, la risposta degli studiosi di più varia formazione: archeologi, medievisti, modernisti e contemporaneisti. In poche settimane, infatti, il nostro *call for papers* si trovò a essere rilanciato, attraverso i siti internet di diverse università e istituti di ricerca, in tutto il mondo. Risonanza di gran lunga inferiore, nonostante l'utilizzo degli stessi canali, riuscivano invece a ottenere le analoghe iniziative di lì a poco condotte da «Horti Hesperidum» su argomenti specialisticamente meglio definiti come quello della *Descrizione di tutti i Paesi Bassi* (1567) di Lodovico Guicciardini (a proposito dei rapporti artistici tra Italia e Paesi nordici nel XVI secolo), e del *Microcosmo della pittura* (1667) di

Francesco Scannelli (a proposito del collezionismo estense nel XVIII secolo).

Evidentemente era il tema in sé, quello appunto delle «Immagine vive», a destare una così inaspettata risonanza. Tanta risonanza si dovrebbe spiegare – mi sembra – in ragione di una nuova e sempre più diffusa esigenza, molto sentita ormai da parte degli studiosi di storia artistica (sollecitati, più o meno consapevolmente, dagli accadimenti del mondo contemporaneo): l'esigenza, cioè, di indagare certa qualità 'attiva' che le immagini avrebbero posseduto nel corso della storia, nelle epoche, nei luoghi e nei contesti sociali e religiosi più diversi prima che esse diventassero, per così dire, gli 'oggetti' – in un certo senso 'passivi' – della moderna disciplina storico-artistica, prima cioè che le stesse immagini si 'trasformassero' in 'reperti', diventando, così, non necessariamente qualcosa di 'morto' (rispetto a una precedente 'vita' perduta), bensì diventando, in ogni caso, qualcosa di 'diverso' da ciò che originariamente esse erano state. Già per il solo fatto di essere 'guardate' sotto una prospettiva disciplinare come quella della storia dell'arte, che è vincolata a proprie istanze di astrazione e di scientificità (in funzione, per esempio, delle classificazioni o delle periodizzazioni), le immagini non hanno fatto altro che 'trasformarsi': ma è vero che, per loro stessa natura, le immagini si trasformano sempre, per effetto della storia e degli uomini che le guardano, e dei luoghi che cambiano; tanto più, oggi, le immagini continuano a trasformarsi per effetto dei nuovi *media* i quali, sottraendole a qualsivoglia prospettiva disciplinare, ce le avvicinano nella loro più imprevedibile, multiforme, moderna 'vitalità'.

Il fatto è che, immersi come siamo nella civiltà nuova del digitale – la civiltà delle immagini virtuali, de-materializzate, de-contestualizzate che a ogni momento vengono spinte fin dentro alla nostra più personale esistenza quotidiana per ricombinarsi imprevedibilmente, dentro di noi, con i nostri stessi ricordi, così da sostanziare profondamente la nostra stessa identità – ci siamo alla fine ridotti a non poter più fare a meno di questo flusso magmatico che si muove sul *web* e da cui veniamo visceralmente nutriti, e senza il quale non riusciremmo proprio a decidere alcunché, né a pensare, né a scrivere, né a comunicare, né a fare

ricerca. In questo modo, però, le immagini che per via digitale, incessantemente, entrano per così dire dentro di noi sono immagini del tutto prive della loro materia, del loro stesso corpo, perché internet, avvicinandocene, ce le impoverisce, ce le trasforma, ce le riduce a immateriali parvenze. Ma così diventa addirittura possibile – ed è questo per molti di noi, come lo è per molti dei nostri studenti, un paradosso davvero mostruoso – diventa possibile, dicevo, studiare la storia dell'arte senza quasi che sentiamo più il bisogno di andare a vedere le opere d'arte, quelle vere, senza cioè riconsiderarle concretamente in rapporto, per esempio, all'esperienza nostra del 'paesaggio' di cui esse sono state e continuano a essere parte: non può che venirne fuori, ormai, una storia dell'arte fatta di opere ridotte alla parvenza immateriale la quale, distaccatasi dalle opere d'arte 'vere', non conserva di esse alcuna idea di fisicità, né possiede la benché minima capacità di coinvolgimento emotivo che derivava anticamente dalla 'presenza', dalla 'corporeità', dal rapporto col 'paesaggio' e col 'contesto', nonché dalle tradizioni e dai ricordi che, dentro quel 'paesaggio', dentro quel 'contesto', rivivevano attraverso le immagini, vivevano nelle immagini. La storia dell'arte ha finito per ridursi, insomma, a una storia di immagini 'morte', staccate cioè dai contesti culturali, religiosi, rituali da cui esse provenivano: in fondo, è proprio questo tipo di storia dell'arte, scientificamente distaccata dalla 'vita', a rispecchiare bene, nel panorama multimediale e globalizzato che stiamo vivendo, il nostro attuale impoverimento culturale.

In considerazione di quanto detto, questa miscellanea sulle «Immagini vive» è stata pensata anzitutto come raccolta di testimonianze sugli orientamenti odierni della disciplina storico-artistica la quale – oggi come non mai afflitta, per di più, dall'arido specialismo accademico che l'ha ridotta alla più mortificante inutilità sociale –, ambisce, vorrebbe o dovrebbe ambire, alla riconquista dei più vasti orizzonti della storia umana, nonché alla ricerca dei legami profondi che uniscono il passato al presente e, dunque, l'uomo alla società e le civiltà, seppure lontane nello spazio o nel tempo, l'una all'altra.

Ebbene questi due fascicoli della V annata (2015) di «Horti Hesperidum», ciascuno diviso nei due tomi che ora finalmente presentiamo, raccolgono i contributi di quanti, archeologi, medievisti, modernisti e contemporaneisti, abbiano voluto rispondere al nostro *call for papers* intervenendo su argomenti sì molto diversi, però tutti collegati a un'idea medesima: quella di verificare, nel passato come nel presente, una certa qualità 'attiva' che sia storicamente appartenuta, o appartenga, alle immagini.

Esattamente come lo enunciavamo nel sito internet di «Horti Hesperidum», alla fine del 2013, era questo il contenuto del nostro *call for papers*:

La rivista semestrale «Horti Hesperidum» intende dedicare il primo fascicolo monografico del 2015 al tema delle “Immagini vive”. Testimonianze letterarie di varie epoche, dall'antichità pagana all'età cristiana medievale e moderna, permettono di indagare il fenomeno antropologico dell'immagine percepita come presenza “viva”, capace di muoversi, parlare, interagire con gli uomini.

Saranno prese in particolare considerazione le seguenti prospettive di indagine:

1. Il rapporto tra il fedele e l'immagine devozionale
2. L'immagine elogiata come viva, vera, parlante, nell'*ekphrasis* letteraria
3. L'iconoclastia, ovvero l'“uccisione” dell'immagine nelle rispettive epoche

Ora, una siffatta formulazione – cui ha partecipato Ilaria Sforza, antichista e grecista – presupponeva, nelle nostre intenzioni, le proposte di metodo già da noi avanzate nell'*Editoriale* al primo numero di «Horti Hesperidum» (2011), dove avevamo cercato di insistere sulla necessità di guardare alle opere d'arte secondo un'ottica diversa da quella più tradizionalmente disciplinare che, in sostanza, si era definita, pure nella molteplicità degli indirizzi metodologici, tra Otto e Novecento. Allora, infatti, ci chiedevamo:

Ma sono pienamente condivisibili, oggi, intenzioni di metodo come le seguenti, che invece meritano la più rispettosa storicizzazione? Ri-



muovere ogni «ingombro leggendario», auspicava Longhi, che si frapponesse tra lo storico e le opere. Considerare queste ultime con il dovuto distacco scientifico. Guardarle «in rapporto con altre opere»: evitare cioè di accostarsi all'opera d'arte – come però sempre accadeva nelle epoche passate – «con reverenza, o con orrore, come magia, come tabù, come opera di Dio o dello stregone, non dell'uomo». Negare, in definitiva, «il mito degli artisti divini, e divinissimi, invece che semplicemente umani». Queste affermazioni, rilette oggi alla luce di nuove esigenze del nostro contemporaneo, finiscono per suonare come la negazione delle storie dell'arte in nome della storia dell'arte. Come la negazione degli uomini in nome dello storico dell'arte. Come la negazione dei modi di vedere in nome della *connoisseurship*. Come la negazione, in definitiva, della stessa 'storia' dell'arte. Infatti la storia ha davvero conosciuto miracoli e prodigi, maghi e stregoni, opere orribilmente belle, sovrumane, inspiegabili, e artisti terribili e divini. Lo storico di oggi ha il dovere di rispettare e comprendere ogni «ingombro leggendario», senza rimuoverlo; dovrebbe avere cioè il dovere di sorprendersi di fronte alle ragioni per cui, anticamente, a destar «meraviglia», «paura», «terrore» erano i monumenti artistici del più lontano passato come anche le opere migliori degli artisti di ogni presente. Quell'auspicato e antiletterario distacco scientifico ha finito in certi casi per rendere, a lungo andare, la disciplina della storia dell'arte, guardando soprattutto a come essa si è venuta trasformando nel panorama universitario degli ultimi decenni, una disciplina asfittica, non umanistica perché programmaticamente tecnica, di uno specialismo staccato dalla cultura, dalla società, dal costume, dalla politica, dalla religione».

In effetti, dalla cultura figurativa contemporanea provengono segnali ineludibili – gli odierni storici dell'arte non possono non tenerne conto – che ci inducono a muoverci in ben altra direzione rispetto alle indicazioni enunciate da Roberto Longhi nelle sue ormai lontane *Proposte per una critica d'arte* (1950) alle quali ci riferivamo nell'appena citato *Editoriale* di «Horti Hesperidum» del 2011. Pensiamo, per esempio, a quanto si verificava in seno alla 55<sup>a</sup> Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Biennale di Venezia (2013), quando artisti e critici dovettero condividere il bisogno di ritrovare la fede – quella fede che, anticamente, era così sconfinata – nel 'potere' delle immagini, e di ritrovare, tentando di recuperarla dal nostro passato, «l'idea che l'immagine

sia un'entità viva, pulsante, dotata di poteri magici e capace di influenzare, trasformare, persino guarire l'individuo e l'intero universo»: d'altronde una tale idea non la si poteva affatto ritenere estranea alla tradizione culturale da cui noi stessi proveniamo nonostante che la modernità 'illuministica' abbia tentato di cancellarla, respingendola come vecchia, come appartenente a una «concezione datata, offuscata da superstizioni arcaiche».

Così, persino sulle pagine del catalogo della stessa Biennale del '13 (come pure su quelle dell'11, dove era fatta oggetto di rimpianto addirittura la potenza mistica di cui in età medievale era capace la 'luce', contro il buio introdotto da una deprecata età dei 'lumi'), l'urgenza di un rinnovato sguardo sul passato e sulla storia era già di per sé un fatto sorprendente e audace: tanto più se, per contrasto, ripensiamo all'altrettanto audace rifiuto del passato che lungo il XX secolo fu provocatoriamente mosso, in nome della modernità, da parte delle avanguardie e delle neo-avanguardie.

Del resto, «la parola 'immagine' contiene nel suo DNA, nella sua etimologia, una prossimità profonda con il corpo e con la morte: in latino l'*imago* era la maschera di cera che i romani creavano come calco per preservare il volto dei defunti»: ma visto che gli uomini del nostro tempo se ne sono dimenticati, serviva ricordare ai visitatori della Esposizione Internazionale che il mistero primigenio della scultura funeraria era, ed è, quello «di opporre alla morte, all'orizzontalità informe, la verticalità e la rigidità della pietra»<sup>3</sup>.

Di fronte a questa nuova disponibilità dei 'contemporaneisti' nei confronti della 'storia', gli storici dovrebbero, da parte loro, tornare a cercare nel contemporaneo le motivazioni della loro stessa ricerca. Sottratte alle rispettive dimensioni rituali, magiche, funerarie, devozionali e religiose – quelle dimensioni che la civiltà moderna, multimediale e globalizzata ha tentato di annul-

<sup>1</sup> *La Biennale di Venezia. 55ª Esposizione d'arte. Il palazzo enciclopedico*, a cura di M. Gioni, Venezia, Marsilio, 2013, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

lare definitivamente – le immagini sono diventate vuoti simulacri, come paiono esserlo quando le si vedono esposte, scientificamente classificate, dietro le vetrine o dentro le sale dei musei al cui interno esse hanno finito per arricchirsi di significati nuovi, certo, ma diversi da quelli che molte di esse possedevano al tempo in cui – citiamo sempre dal catalogo dell'esposizione del '13 – «magia, miti, tradizioni e credenze religiose contavano quanto l'osservazione diretta della realtà»<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 28.



A NAZARENE IN THE NUDE.  
QUESTIONS OF REPRESENTATION  
IN DEVOTIONAL IMAGES OF NEW SPAIN

*ALENA ROBIN*

The Viceroyalty of New Spain had a proliferation of miraculous images, both paintings and sculptures, which were recorded in sermons, and in religious and civil chronicles. The role played by images in those narrations is such that they become the protagonists of the stories. The reading of the images' deeds gives the impression that each church, chapel, hermitage and convent owned at least one effigy that had manifested its power and it was mandatory that its memory would prevail. These works of art were not remembered for their aesthetic quality or for the masters that painted or sculpted them. In most cases, the artists involved remained anonymous; in some cases a divine intervention was brought forward. These works of art were evoked for the way that they impacted their environment. This situation has been interpreted as a manifestation of the pride of the *criollo* population, the Spanish population born in America. It was proof of the spiritual and material wellbeing of the New Spa-

nish territory and the divine election over it: these images incarnated a necessity of cohesion and identity.<sup>1</sup>

In March 1665 the Inquisition of Mexico City received an inquiry from the priest Alexandro Favián to obtain their opinion on different iconographical matters. Had the Nazarene been carried with a rope or a chain during his Passion? What should the design of his tunic be? His statement was founded on a sculpture of the Nazarene that caused terror for being, supposedly, in the nude. The tribunal studied these considerations for various months. The notification created a profound consternation between the inquisitors: many qualifications followed and the importance of the topic was constantly reiterated. At the beginning, his doubts were equally studied, but eventually the examiners focussed their attention on the topic of Christ's nudity in artistic representations, judged as completely inadmissible. This situation was so alarming to the religious authorities that they eventually published a decree regarding the issue.

This article is based on unpublished archival documents preserved in the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico (hereafter AGN). The case will be studied in detail, revealing the worries of the elite of New Spain in relation to a sculpture of the Nazarene that received a considerable public worship in a prominent hospital in the capital of the Viceroyalty. In so doing, this essay will address the environment that generated and promoted the cult of this image, as well as the issue of how the believers interacted with the devotional image, alleged to be miraculous by many. The questions raised on the possibilities and limits of nudity in religious art addressed in this case are related to con-

The material presented here was first analysed in my unpublished Master's Thesis, ROBIN 2002. It was subsequently presented as a conference paper in *Encrucijada, I Congreso Internacional sobre Escultura Virreinal*, in Oaxaca, Mexico, in 2008 yet the conference proceedings were never published. I would like to acknowledge the help received from my graduate research assistant, Aya Ishai, in the preparation of the English version. I also wish to thank the constant support of the staff of the Archivo General de la Nación (Mexico) and the funding received by the Dean's Travel-Research Grant of the University of Western Ontario (Canada).

<sup>1</sup> RUBIAL GARCÍA 1999, pp. 63-64.

cerns that emanated from the Council of Trent in their last session on religious images. The conclusion reached by the Inquisition is significant: the image was not sanctioned for being obscene but for not respecting the evangelical facts. Due to the important public worship it received, the sculpture and the copies that circulated were not to be destroyed but rather preserved. However, it was requested that the images should be modified accordingly.

The author of the missive to the religious tribunal, Alexandro Favián (ca. 1624-?), is also worthy of mention. He was indeed a correspondent to Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680), the German Jesuit scientist residing then in Rome, who maintained correspondents with people in different parts of the globe. In one of his letters to Kircher, Favián referred to the case of the Nazarene and the Inquisition as one of the laudable and outstanding actions he had accomplished in New Spain.

*Alexandro Favián and Athanasius Kircher*

With an encyclopaedic spirit and as a specialist of oriental languages, Athanasius Kircher was one of the great scientists of the Baroque era. He published around 40 books in his life that treated rather diverse topics: mathematics, astronomy, acoustics, music, optics, medicine, chemistry, archaeology, volcanology, etc. In 1667, Kircher published a book with the following dedication: «To the extremely wise man Alexandro Fabián, native of Puebla of los Ángeles in the New World, distinguished theologian, philosopher and mathematician, and also immensely generous founder of the Congregation of Christ Secular Priests in the Mexican kingdom, best wishes, Athanasius Kircher of the Company of Jesus»<sup>2</sup>. Since the colonial era, Alexandro Favián

<sup>2</sup> «Al sapientísimo varón Alexandro Fabián, natural de Puebla de los Ángeles en el Nuevo Orbe, teólogo insigne, filósofo y matemático, y también en el reino mexicano fundador munificentísimo de la Congregación de Cristo Sacerdotes seculares, desea

has been mentioned as an erudite, knowledgeable in philosophy, mathematics and theology, based on the dedication of Kircher<sup>3</sup>. The priest from the city of Puebla, the second largest urban center of the viceroyalty, was, however, recovered by the actual scholarship thanks to the publication by Osorio Romero (1993) of the letters that Favián wrote to Kircher. This epistolary relationship lasted from 1661 up to Kircher's death, and even though Favián and the Jesuit scientist never met in person, through their exchanges we know of the existence, projects, ambitions, dreams and doubts of an almost unknown priest from New Spain.

An intermediary between Favián and Kircher introduces him in the following way: son of Alessandro Fabiano from Genoa, through commerce he amassed a certain fortune in Puebla. He mentioned a Holy Hermitage of the Calvary that Favián patronized where many people would gather during Lent<sup>4</sup>. He also described his hobbies: scientist of his time, he also played different musical instruments such as the organ, lyre, harp, and violin. He also composed poetry and would entertain himself fixing wheel clocks and other curiosities, in such a way that left him without idle time.

Kircher and Favián shared a thirst for encyclopaedic knowledge and scientific novelties: astronomy, physics, mathematics, mechanics, music, acoustics, movement and light. In his letters to Kircher, Favián complained about the intellectual solitude he felt in New Spain, specifically in Puebla, and he seemed to have found in the German Jesuit and his scientific studies the stimulus he needed. Thus began a long list of requests: books, from

felicidad, Atanasio Kircher de la Compañía de Jesús», KIRCHER 1667, reproduced in OSORIO ROMERO 1993, pp. 111-115.

<sup>3</sup> Both Juan José Eguiara y Eguren (1696-1763) and José Mariano Beristáin de Souza (1756-1817) describe Favián as such in their respective compilation of New Spanish authors, cfr. Respectively, EGUIARA Y EGUREN 1986, tome I, vol. II, pp. 217-219, and BERISTÁIN DE SOUZA 1980, vol. 1, pp. 488-489. Elías Trabulse also includes Favián as a New Spanish scientist based on Kircher's text, cfr. TRABULSE 1983, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Francisco María Tassara to Atanasio Kircher, Genova, January 18, 1664, in: OSORIO ROMERO 1993, pp. 41-43.



Kircher and other authors he quoted, scientific instruments mentioned in the works of the Jesuit, and objects of religious character, such as relics and devotional stamps<sup>5</sup>. Kircher, on his part, seemed eager to respond to his new friend's petitions.

The arrival of these exotic gifts allowed Favián to develop an intellectual growth and social promotion in the *poblano* area since the priest managed to promote them well: the gentlemen of the city, the canons from the cathedral and other important religious figures of the town would visit his house to see what Kircher had sent him<sup>6</sup>. Favián mentioned to his Jesuit friend the popularity he received through the instruments arriving from Europe, and, starting in 1664, he revealed his intention of instituting a museum and library with them and for that reason he was asking for more objects, prints and relics<sup>7</sup>.

Favián also sent items of great interest to Kircher. Like many learned people of Europe at the time, the German erudite possessed a museum of contrivances, or cabinet of curiosities, made of exotic articles of natural science, scientific artefacts and specimens of different origins, many of which were gathered through international informants, such as Favián<sup>8</sup>. From Puebla the priest sent chocolate, lacquered wooden objects from Olinálá, items of a local stone called *tecali*, different feathered pieces known as *plumarias*, Mexican herbs, flowers and plants with their descriptions, a Mexican armadillo, an iguana, and a globefish, to which Kircher devoted a whole chapter in his book

<sup>5</sup> The shipping of books from Kircher to Favián is documented. For example, there is a list of goods shipped from Rome to Cádiz from the late seventeenth century: «a book of the combinations of Father Athanasius Kircher for Alexandro Fabian, to be paid for from Rome» («un libro de las combinaciones del Padre Athanasio Kircher para Alexandro Fabian, que ha de pagar el costo desde Roma»), AGN, Jesuitas, leg. 1-11, caja 1, exp. 72, quoted in: ALCALA 1998 p. 314.

<sup>6</sup> Alexandro Favián (AF) to Atanasio Kircher (AK), Puebla, May 9, 1663: OSORIO ROMERO 1993, pp. 23-24. See also: AF to AK, Puebla, december 1665 or first days of 1666: OSORIO ROMERO 1993, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> AF to AK, Puebla, August 23, 1664: OSORIO ROMERO 1993, p. 46.

<sup>8</sup> Some objects are still preserved in Italy, cfr. *ATHANASIVS KIRCHER, IL MUSEO DEL MONDO* 2001.

*Magneticum naturae regnum*<sup>9</sup>, the work he dedicated to Favián. The relationship between Favián and Kircher probably reached its peak in 1667 when Kircher's book was published. In Osorio Romero's opinion, Kircher's dedicatory was an exceptional achievement for Favián and had a huge impact on him: «he led him to redefine, imaginatively, his place in the pueblan social environment and made more urgent the realization of dreams that, for many years, he had encouraged»<sup>10</sup>. However, the dedicatory was the result of a real friendship between the two, and Kircher described this event as an «immortal testimony of friendship, of alliance, and of the love grown between us»<sup>11</sup>.

*The Holy Company of Jesus Nazarene and the Way of the Cross of Puebla*

One of Favián's desires was to be granted an ecclesiastical position, and in particular he envisaged being the archbishop of Michoacán. His hope was that Kircher's contacts in Europe would help him meet this endeavour<sup>12</sup>. To achieve this, Favián made a long list of «laudable and prodigious actions» that he had accomplished. Two of these were related with the Passion of Christ in Puebla.

According to Favián, the devotion that the *poblanos* had towards the Passion of Christ was through the Congregation of the Holy Company of Jesus Nazarene that he had founded in 1656<sup>13</sup>. Five years later, the congregation's membership consisted of 400 priests and 800 lay people. New chapels of the way

<sup>9</sup> Reproduced in OSORIO ROMERO 1993, pp. 115-128.

<sup>10</sup> «de indujo a redefinir, imaginariamente, su lugar en el entorno social poblano e hizo más urgente la realización de los sueños que, desde años atrás, alentaba», OSORIO ROMERO 1993, p. XXIII.

<sup>11</sup> «inmortal testimonio de la amistad, de la alianza y del amor nacido entre nosotros», KIRCHER 1667, reproduced in: OSORIO ROMERO 1993, p. 115.

<sup>12</sup> AF to AK, Puebla, March 12, 1666 in OSORIO ROMERO 1993, pp. 75-83.

<sup>13</sup> AF to AK, Puebla, February 2, 1661 in OSORIO ROMERO 1993, p. 16.

of the cross were built in Puebla instead of the destroyed hermitages of a former one that was in ruins, thanks to Favián and his community<sup>14</sup>. The congregation already had the authorization of the bishop from Puebla, but in 1663 Favián enquired through Kircher to obtain the pope's recognition<sup>15</sup>.

The objective of the institution founded by Favián was to inspire the priests to embrace a holy and exemplary life, secluded and virtuous, in perpetual withdrawal from the world, and living in the housing next to the chapels. Besides administering the sacraments to the parishioners, the priests lived in continuous oration and contemplation of the mysteries of the Passion of Christ<sup>16</sup>. Favián described to Kircher how successful the project had been, yet he complained that he had wasted his father's heritage in this enterprise<sup>17</sup>.

Various contemporary religious and civil chronicles from Puebla mentioned the chapels of the way of the cross. Yet only Miguel de Alcalá and Mendiola (1669-1746) mentioned Favián when registering the eighth station, saying that he was the one responsible for funding the cost of the chapel and its annexed house, and for encouraging his fellows for the construction of the remaining chapels<sup>18</sup>. This might indicate that Favián's patronage to the way of the cross was not as active as he suggested in his letters to Kircher, but his attitude of animating others was worth mentioning. His congregation, apparently, was not noticed by the chronicles of his era.

<sup>14</sup> AF to AK, Puebla, February 2, 1661 in OSORIO ROMERO 1993, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> AF to AK, Puebla, May 9, 1663 in OSORIO ROMERO 1993, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> AF to AK, Puebla, May 9, 1663 in OSORIO ROMERO 1993, pp. 31, 33, 34, 35.

<sup>17</sup> AF to AK, Puebla, May 9, 1663 in OSORIO ROMERO 1993, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> ALCALÁ Y MENDIOLA 1992, pp. 156-157.

*Polemics of Representing the Nazarene*

Another praiseworthy action that Favián described in many details to Kircher in his letters is related to some iconographic doubts he had with the visual representation of Christ: had the Nazarene been carried with a rope or a chain during his Passion? What should the design of his tunic be?

Traditionally, to visually distinguish the different events of Christ in his Passion, artists resorted to various attributes and corporeal attitudes. Although the Bible does not provide many iconographical details, artists could rely on the apocryphal gospels, an extensive pious literature and the artistic tradition itself, which would complete the evangelical description of the events. Some iconographical treatises also studied closely every single detail of the Passion of Christ<sup>19</sup>.

The issue narrated by Favián began in 1665, when he sponsored the titular image for his Congregation: a Nazarene carrying his Cross<sup>20</sup>. According to the *poblano* priest, the Nazarene should be dressed «with his dark purple tunic, tightly fitted with his cincture, and with a chain on his neck, which here seems to us [...] to be an object of great devotion, morality, and severity»<sup>21</sup>. The problem arose from another devotion to Christ that was very popular in Mexico City, and its visual representation did not correspond with Favián's statement. In his words the sculpture was: «completely nude, with a cloth as an apron or white breeches around the waist»<sup>22</sup>. This situation was unacceptable to Favián, and, according to him, instead of inspiring devotion it removed it. The priest was very confused as it went against the

<sup>19</sup> In this sense, the meticulous attention that the Spanish monk paid to this topic in his treatise is outstanding, cfr. INTERIÁN DE AYALA 1782, pp. 367-464.

<sup>20</sup> AF to AK, Puebla, March 12, 1666 in OSORIO ROMERO 1993, pp. 79-80.

<sup>21</sup> «con su túnica morada oscura, ceñida con su cíngulo, y con su cadena a cuello, que acá nos parece [...] que es cosa devotísima, decentísima, y muy grave», Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter, AGN), *Inquisición*, vol. 604 (1ª parte), exp. 33, f. 185r.

<sup>22</sup> «todo desnudo, con un paño como mandil o calzones blancos por la cintura», AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 604 (1ª parte), exp. 33, f. 184 v.

Holy Scripture. The devotion and affection that the faithful had in Mexico City was such that «it now was throughout all of the kingdom and had already passed even to Spain, so that one did not see anything else in the streets and plazas, and there would not be a house, however poor it might have been, that did not have one of them painted or sculpted; with which now the other images of Jesus Nazarene, of our church as of the others, were not those which would be given devotion and neither were they remembered now»<sup>23</sup>.

Favián was convinced that his way of representing the Nazarene was the appropriate one, so he decided to obtain the opinion of the Inquisition. His hope was that the mistake would be rectified in Mexico City and the correct manner to dress the Nazarene be respected, and that the image of his congregation be adequately venerated.

These considerations might appear quite futile today. However, the Holy Office analysed them thoroughly for months. The letter created a perturbation among the inquisitorial fathers: many qualifications followed Favián's consultation and the importance of the issue was constantly reiterated. At the beginning, all questions were debated equally with the same consideration. However, the attention of the inquisitorial evaluators was subsequently centered and restricted to the topic of the nudity of Christ in visual arts as being something inadmissible. This situation was so alarming for the Holy Tribunal that an edict was published to prohibit the nudity of Christ in such representations.

Through the revision of the Inquisition case it is obvious that the image alluded to by Favián was located in the Hospital de la Concepción de Nuestra Señora. The story of the hospital started soon after the Conquest as Hernán Cortés founded it. To-

<sup>23</sup> «ya había por todo el reino y aun había ya pasado a España, que no se veía a otra cosa por las calles y plazas, y no se hallaría casa, por pobre que fuese, que no tuviese alguno de ellos pintada o de talla; conque ya las otras imágenes de Jesús Nazareno, así de nuestra iglesia como de las demás, no había quien les tuviera devoción ni se acordase ya de ellas», OSORIO ROMERO 1993, pp. 80-81.

wards the mid seventeenth century, the hospital acquired an image of the Nazarene that received such an important worship by the people that the hospital changed its name to Hospital de Jesús, as it is still currently known<sup>24</sup>.

The effigy of the hospital is part of the numerous examples that form the tradition of miraculous manifestations in New Spain.<sup>25</sup> The legend goes that a prominent indigenous woman of Mexico City dreamed of an image of Jesus, which conveyed her tremendous devotion. In her vision, Christ had fallen on his way to Mount Calvary.<sup>26</sup> Wanting to have a sculpted version of her dream, she requested many sculptors to fashion the vision, but none could achieve it. However, God wanted to reward her faith and so he directed some Indians to her house that were said to be sculptors. They succeeded to carve the image to perfection, yet before the indigenous woman could pay her debt they had disappeared. She enjoyed the Nazarene in her domestic oratory and before her death she asked her children to donate it to one of the hospitals of the city. After rolling dice many times to decide which church to send it to, it was offered to the Hospital de la Concepción de Nuestra Señora where it soon started to work miracles. On March 3 1663, the Nazarene had entered the old church of the hospital and soon after it was venerated in the new church. This new building was dedicated on Sunday October 11 1665<sup>27</sup>, only months after Favián's communication reached the Inquisition.

A wooden print from a 1664 sermon likely illustrates how the *poblano* priest got to know the image and the public worship that it received (fig. 1)<sup>28</sup>. The stamp illustrates the surroundings wi-

<sup>24</sup> For the history of the hospital, cfr. BÁEZ MACÍAS 1982.

<sup>25</sup> Cfr. RUBIAL GARCÍA 1995, pp. 13-31.

<sup>26</sup> SALAZAR MUÑATONES 1664, pp. 2-3, and CABRERA Y QUINTERO 1981, pp. 408-409.

<sup>27</sup> ROBLES 1972, vol. 1, pp. 11-12.

<sup>28</sup> I am grateful to Pablo Amador for calling my attention to a copy of this sermon that contains the engraving, which was not located in the one that I had initially consulted, maybe as a result of the Inquisition edict. Both copies are preserved in the Fondo Lafragua, Biblioteca Nacional de México.

thin which the sculpture received worship in the hospital: the statue is falling to the ground, sustaining itself on the right hand and knee, with the crown of thorns and rope at the neck, holding the cross with the other hand, on a pedestal of a few steps, and with curtains on the sides. The effigy is wearing some kind of veil, offering a partial nudity that is uncommon in this particular moment of the Passion of Christ.

Traditionally, the Nazarene illustrates the moment in which Christ walks to the Calvary, carrying his cross, dressed with the purple gown, sometimes wearing the crown of thorns and a rope around his neck. Such is the case, for example, in this painting by Baltasar Echave Rioja (1632-1682) (fig. 2). Therefore, the figure in the Hospital de Jesús was not, in a strict sense, a Nazarene, but most likely a representation of a fallen Christ on the way to Calvary. Furthermore, the sculpture of the hospital differed completely from the most common formula in regards to the garment for this particular moment of the Passion. For these reasons, the work caused confusion among the members of Favián's congregation in the city of Puebla.

The case of the Nazarene before the Inquisition extended from March 17 1665, the date of Favián's inquiry to the Holy Tribunal, to November 9 of the same year, the date of the last annotation to the proceedings<sup>29</sup>. Five inquisitorial examiners issued an opinion in the case. The longest consideration consists of a double-sided page, and a quarter of another, while the shortest limits itself to a paragraph: the author affirms that to avoid repeating what others asserted so well in detail, he agreed with the previous censure. The case totalled nine double-sided pages.

The Inquisition received Favián's request on March 23 and since that moment the importance of the issue raised by the *poblaño* priest was recognized. The first censure is from March 26 and, starting from this moment, the opinion of more qualifying fathers was required considering the importance of the matter. However, the topic was not addressed again until the end of

<sup>29</sup> There is a possibility that the document relating the case might be incomplete as it concludes in a very abrupt manner.

October 1665. The reason why the case ended so soon is unknown, but the motive behind its reopening can be speculated.

The dedication of the new church of the Hospital de Jesús was celebrated on Sunday October 11 1665. The viceroy, the judges, and all the religious orders attended the celebration<sup>30</sup>. This way, the Nazarene of the hospital's state of «nudity» would have been apparent to many authorities, according to the above-mentioned engraving (fig. 1), although six months would have gone by since Favián's notification. It is most likely for this reason that the Inquisition addressed the issue again on October 21, only 10 days after the consecration of the new building. This event would have also fomented the worship to the effigy: the necessity to have more inquisitorial fathers have a look at Favián's notification was due to «the production of many copies of the effigy of Christ Our Lord in the way which is referred to in this text»<sup>31</sup>. The growing circulation of the image would have prompted the Holy Tribunal to quickly reach an agreement: on November 5 the sacristan of the church was notified of the Inquisition case and the decision it took with respect to the Nazarene that was under his care.

#### *Favián's First Doubt: Rope or Metal Chain*

In regards to the first topic which Favián addressed to the Inquisition, he stated that he had reviewed many authors and «in all I found it to be most likely and probable that it was a very strong and rigid chain»<sup>32</sup>. He based his argument on «the stamped volume and context and concordance» of the Gospels of

<sup>30</sup> ROBLES 1972, vol. 1, pp. 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> «por sacarse ya muchos traslados de la efigie de Cristo Señor Nuestro Señor en la forma que se refiere en este escrito», AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 604 (1a parte), exp. 33, fs. 187r-187v.

<sup>32</sup> «en todos hallé por más cierto y probable que fue cadena muy fuerte y rígida», AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 604 (1a parte), exp. 33, f. 184r.



Hieronymus Nadal (1507-1580). The first edition of the *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* of the Majorcan Jesuit Nadal was published posthumously in Antwerp in 1593. It consisted of 153 engravings, most of them from the Wierix brothers<sup>33</sup>. Soon after, the *Adnotationes et Meditationes in Evangelia* was published, consisting of Nadal's comments on the illustrations. The work was an immediate success, not restricted to the Jesuit environment that first promoted it, and it was quickly translated, adapted and would be constantly reedited.

Thus Favián referred to a well-established iconographical source to support the use of a chain in the representation of the Nazarene. On the one hand, this is a testimony to the circulation of Nadal's images in New Spain<sup>34</sup>. On the other hand, as it is the only source quoted by Favián, this might point to the fact that it was quite an authoritative argument at the time. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that it was a book which Favián had requested from his friend Athanasius Kircher<sup>35</sup>. This petition might indicate that it was not easy for Favián to access Nadal's book within the viceroyalty, although he had knowledge of its existence.

The reading system of Nadal's images is very didactic: each engraving offers various scenes, which complete the representation of the main evangelical event (fig. 3). Most of the scenes are identified by a letter that relates to an explication: a brief

<sup>33</sup> MAUQUOY-HENDRICKX, 1976, pp. 28-63; MAUQUOY-HENDRICKX 1982, pp. 491-496; NADAL 2003-2007; RODRÍGUEZ G. DE CEBALLOS 1975, pp. 7-15. On the Wierix brothers, the most recent and complete compilation is *HOLLSTEIN'S DUTCH & FLEMISH* 2003-2007. I am grateful to Walter Melion for his help on my reflection of Favián's use of Nadal.

<sup>34</sup> For more on the topic, cfr.: ROBIN 2006.

<sup>35</sup> «I also want to request from Your Reverence some other [books] that are not here, neither has it been possible to find them, these ones are by Father Jerónimo Natalis, printed, about the entire life of Christ, deeds, parables and miracles according to the context of the four evangelists» («También quiero suplicar a Vuestra Reverencia por algunos otros [libros] que por acá no los hay, ni ha sido posible hallarles, éstos son el del padre Jerónimo Natalis, estampado, de toda la vida de Christo, acciones, parábolas y milagros según el contexto de los cuatro evangelistas»), AF to AK Puebla, May 9, 1663; OSORIO ROMERO 1993, p. 24.

one at the bottom of each illustration, or a more extensive one in the volume of *Adnotationes*. Favián referred to both comments in his missive to the Inquisition. This is proof that the *poblano* priest not only considered and analysed the illustrations, but that he read, in Latin, the more extensive text of Nadal.

Favián specifically focussed on four engravings. The image numbered 109 illustrates the moment of Christ's arrest (fig. 3). The soldiers hold in their hands a thick chain to capture Jesus, as the *poblano* priest noted. Nothing in the caption of the print alludes to this detail. In the meditation, three times mention is made that Jesus is to be bound, but never is it specified how this is to be done<sup>36</sup>.

In the following print, the soldiers are taking him away with the chain and this is a good example to demonstrate that Favián did not only visually rely on Nadal but also consulted the text (fig. 4). In the image 110, Christ is captured and taken with a chain, but the inscription of the letter A, «Jesus was bound by His hands and neck» does not specify, as Favián stated, that this was done with a chain. Nevertheless, in the comment to the letter A of this engraving in *Adnotationes*, a chain is mentioned: «Tradition tells that a chain bound His neck, and that His hands were tied behind His back with cruel ropes»<sup>37</sup>. Follows a long meditation where Jesus' chains are frequently mentioned. According to Nadal, this is when Christ begins to suffer and what allows for salvation: «Let's come now to Christ's chains. Christ, the son of God, begins to suffer! Let's prepare to bring His suffering deep into our own hearts, and let it suffuse our flesh and bones. Humble JESUS, open our hearts to fill them with devout and strong compassion and a vivid sense of Your pain. For then is opened the gate to heaven and to those Your celestial gifts to devout souls that can only be suggested but never fully appreciated»<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> NATALI 2007, p. 103

<sup>37</sup> NATALI 2007, p. 107.

<sup>38</sup> NATALI 2007, p. 109. The full meditation ranges from pp. 108-110.

Favián continued his explanation of the image 111 (fig. 5) for which he said that the annotation was even more complete. Nonetheless, none of the legends of the plate, neither the explanation of letter A, nor the lower explication confirms, as the *poblano* priest said, that it was done so. Again, the consultation of the text of *Adnotationes* corroborates that Favián did not only recur to Nadal for visual support<sup>39</sup>. However, when Christ is carrying his cross in the image 125, he is represented with a rope, a detail which Favián attributed to a mistake of the draughtsman, «since in all of the antecedents he had been represented with a chain» (fig. 6)<sup>40</sup>. According to Nadal's text in *Adnotationes*, the *poblano* priest would be correct, since a chain is mentioned again<sup>41</sup>.

It is important to stress that on many occasions Nadal cites, textually or visually, as in the case of the image 111 (fig. 5), jointly the rope and the chain, a fact that Favián either did not take into account, or did not want to draw attention to. With this, Favián judged his argument to be complete, as far as the chain was concerned, and he concluded saying that he did not include more authors, as he would never finish<sup>42</sup>.

Only two inquisitorial fathers took into account Favián's first doubt, if Christ was taken through his Passion with a rope or a chain; the rest of the examiners centered their analysis on the nudity that the Nazarene of the Hospital de Jesús allegedly presented. The edict published as a result of the discussions around Favián's missive did not at all mention the issue of the rope or the chain of the Nazarene. It can therefore be inferred that it was not a controverted topic for the Holy Tribunal. This

<sup>39</sup> «From there they advanced the chain that they held, [...] the rope of his hands tied behind», and he continues further, «one should not consider the bonds of the chain and the rope of the neck or of the hands of Jesus lightly, but painfully and cruelly», NATALI 1595, p. 274. I am grateful to Omar Escamilla for his assistance with the Latin translation.

<sup>40</sup> «pues en todos los antecedentes le había puesto con cadena», AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 604 (1ª parte), exp. 33, fs. 184r-184v.

<sup>41</sup> NATALI 1595, p. 339.

<sup>42</sup> AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 604 (1a parte), exp. 33, f. 184v.

situation reveals the true preoccupation of the New Spanish Inquisition: the question of the rope or the chain was an iconographic doubt that had no theological implications. Nevertheless, it does not explain Favián's determination that the Inquisition recognize his way of representing the Nazarene with a chain as the most appropriate. My attempts to discover some relics or indulgences that would support Favián's position did not succeed.

*Favián's Second Doubt: the Nazarene's Tunic*

Throughout his Passion, Christ was dressed and undressed in different ways in diverse moments, for various reasons and people. Again, the Bible does not specify much in this respect and most likely it was converted into an established tradition through different Passion writings, pious books, and artistic treatises. The confusion that prevailed in regards to this topic is evident through these texts. Nevertheless, Favián's preoccupation was different. The effigies of the Nazarene that he had patronized for his congregation were made «in accordance with the orders of the Church», which, according to Favián, he had consulted in many authors.

A source which Favián constantly repeats throughout his notification to the Inquisition is the decree of Urban VIII (born Maffeo Barberino, 1568-1644) on the reformation of the images (1642). However, more than the reformation of the images, Urban VIII decree reiterated what the Council of Trent had issued: it tried to eradicate the introduction of new topics or new ways of representing traditional themes, recognising as such the weight of the tradition, which coincides with Favián's position<sup>43</sup>. Yet Urban VIII did not concretely establish anything in

<sup>43</sup> «Furthermore, we order that the images painted or sculpted in a different way, are to be retained by the Church or destroyed, or that they be remade in the way and in the form that has been used from a venerable time within the Catholic Church, with the aim that, through these images, worship and veneration will increase, and with

respect to the design of the Nazarene's tunic, which probably could be found in the writings of the Jesuit Antonio de Quintanadueñas that Favián mentioned. Research in different antique libraries indicates that Quintanadueñas circulated in New Spain, but I was not able to localize the comment to Urban VIII decree, to which Favián said that he recurred to decide on the design of the Nazarene's tunic<sup>44</sup>.

Despite all the attention Favián paid in respect to the issue of the Nazarene's clothing, the attention of the inquisitorial examiners only took into account this aspect in direct relation with the quandary of the nudity that the Nazarene of the Hospital de Jesús in Mexico City presented, as seen in the print that accompanied the 1664 sermon (fig. 1). The nudity of Christ was not the central preoccupation of Alexandro Favián. The *poblano* priest brought up this situation while criticizing the sculpture of Mexico City, in contrast to the Nazarene of his congregation in Puebla. As mentioned previously, from Favián's description it is understood that the effigy in Mexico City was not completely

the aim that that which the eyes of the faithful are subject to would not appear disorganized or novel, but would nourish devotion and piety. Still, we establish that in the churches there should not be arranged – it does not matter to whom they belong – in the facades or in the vestibules, profane images, or images that represent indecency or dishonesty, since saintliness is due in the House of God»,

(«Nous ordonnons en outre que les images peintes ou sculptées de manière différente, soient refoulées des églises et détruites, ou bien soient refaites et reconduites au mode et à la forme déjà en usage depuis un temps vénérable dans l'Église catholique, afin qu'au moyen de ces images grandissent le culte et la vénération, et afin que ce qu'on soumet aux yeux des fidèles n'apparaisse pas désordonné ou nouveau, mais alimente la dévotion et la piété. Nous établissons encore que ne soient pas disposées dans les églises – à quiconque elles appartiennent – sur leurs façades ou dans les vestibules, des images profanes, ou qui présentent l'indécence et la malhonnêteté, puisque la sainteté est due à la maison de Dieu»), MENOZZI 1991, p. 206.

Apparently, the decree of Urban VIII created a lasting impact in the Hispanic world. It was mentioned in the synod of 1685 in the island Santo Domingo, and the influence was felt well into the 18th century. It is mentioned in the artistic treatise of Interián de Ayala and in the IV Provincial Council of the Mexican Church, cfr.: RODRIGUEZ DEMORIZI 1966, p. 119; INTERIAN DE AYALA 1782, p. 23; ZAHINO PEÑAFORT 1999, p. 245.

<sup>44</sup> Favián refers to *Singularia theologiae moralis* of Quintanadueñas, yet it is unclear to what section of the book he specifically alludes, cfr. AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 604 (1ª parte), exp. 33, f. 184 r.

nude, but that the Nazarene, instead of dressing in his traditional tunic, was only covered by a loincloth, «with a cloth as an apron or white breeches around the waist».

The discussions of the examiners in relation to this topic were animated and went on for weeks. Their conclusion was that the representation of the Nazarene of the Hospital de Jesús with partial nudity went against the Gospels and allowing it would be conceding that people could believe it so happened<sup>45</sup>.

### *The Sacristan*

On the afternoon of November 5 1665, the secretary of the Holy Tribunal notified Antonio Calderón, the sacristan of the church of the hospital, of the inquisitional decree and the sanction that had to be applied to the Nazarene under his care<sup>46</sup>. At first, it seems there was a good disposition to collaborate, but then the authorities of the hospital retracted. A few days later, they informed the Inquisition that instead of dressing the effigy with its purple tunic, they «would comply with the mandate of this tribunal, dressing the sacred image with a light veil in such a way as to be able to see the wounds of his sacred flesh»<sup>47</sup>. This quotation seems to suggest that «the wounded flesh» was what impacted the devotee, hence the wide devotion the effigy received. If they applied the inquisitorial sanction, that powerful aspect of the Nazarene would be covered with the purple robe. It is worth going back to the 1664 sermon that accentuates this aspect of the sculpture: «you now show him in public so wounded so as to steal the hearts of all of the faithful»<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 604 (1ª parte), exp. 33, f. 190r.

<sup>46</sup> AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 604 (1ª parte), exp. 33, fs. 190v.

<sup>47</sup> «Cumpliría con el mandato de este tribunal vistiendo la sagrada imagen con un velillo claro de manera que se pudiese ver lo lastimado de sus carnes santísimas», AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 604 (1ª parte), exp. 33, fs. 191r.

<sup>48</sup> «Os mostráis hoy en lo público tan llagado, para arrebatarlos de todos los fieles los corazones», SALAZAR MUÑATONES 1664, p. 8v.

Showing the wounded body of Christ was a common topic in New Spanish art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: it was a visual device meant to promote the sensibility and devotion of the believers<sup>49</sup>. It is in this context that the request of the authorities of the hospital can be understood. Nevertheless, the inquisitorial examiners were opposed to the proposition of dressing the image with a translucent veil that would allow the wounded flesh to be appreciated. The proposal of promoting the compassion of the faithful through the exposed wounds of Christ was thus accepted by the church, yet it all depended on the moment of representation: this necessity of fomenting the compunction of the devotee could not go without the evangelical facts. It was acceptable to show, for example, Christ bound to the column with some nudity that revealed the torments suffered through his Passion, but the same could not be done with the Nazarene because it went against the gospels.

Consequently, the inquisitorial examiners were opposed to the proposition of the hospital's authorities. In common agreement they prescribed that: «it is necessary to dress the image of Jesus Nazarene in that moment with clothes that cover his most holy flesh in the way in which one is accustomed and to which the Sacred Roman Catholic Church has become accustomed».<sup>50</sup> Again, the weight of the church tradition supported a visual representation. It was specified that it had to be accomplished «without any delay».

### *The Published Edict*

The copy of the published edict conserved in the Archivo General de la Nación is not signed and only dated 1665; the day

<sup>49</sup> For example: BARGELLINI 1995, ROBIN 2007.

<sup>50</sup> «Debe vestirse la imagen de Jesús Nazareno en aquel paso con vestiduras que cubran sus santísimas carnes en forma y manera que se acostumbra y ha acostumbrado la Sagrada Iglesia Católica Romana», AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 604 (1ª parte), exp. 33, fs. 191r- 191v.

and month are not specified. It constitutes a clear result of the animated considerations of the inquisitorial fathers that followed Favián's missive. The edict, as others from the Holy Tribunal, not only applied to Mexico City and the archbishop of Mexico, but to «all of the states, and provinces of New Spain, and bishoprics of Tlaxcala, Michoacán, Guatemala, Guadalajara, Chiapas, Yucatán, Oaxaca, Vera-Paz, Honduras, Nicaragua, Nueva Vizcaya, the Philippine Islands and its districts and jurisdictions».<sup>51</sup>

The decree describes the image in the nude, «from the waist up, and from his knees to his feet, with the holy cross on his most holy shoulders», which again confirms that the Nazarene was never in a state of complete nudity<sup>52</sup>. The printed images in paper, satin, or taffeta should be shown to the inquisitorial commissioners: it is not stated that they should be destroyed. This could be the case with the above mentioned sermon of 1664 showing the Nazarene without its proper tunic: not all of the copies consulted of the sermon preserve the print of the effigy (fig. 1). The sculpted or painted copies should be dressed with its purple tunic, without the necessity of being shown to the authorities. In case of transgressing the dispositions of the Holy Tribunal, the sentence was major excommunication and 500 Castilian ducats for extraordinary expense of the Holy Tribunal. It is surprising that the Inquisition seemed to be completely unaware of the state of partial nudity of the Nazarene of the Hospital de Jesús, despite the recent consecration of the new church where the sculpture was venerated and the publication of a sermon in which an engraving illustrating the effigy in such a way was circulating (fig. 1). The analysis of the inquisitorial examiners in this case did not take into account if it was disho-

<sup>51</sup> «Todos los estados, y provincias de la Nueva España, y obispados de Tlaxcala, Michoacán, Guatemala, Guadalajara, Chiapas, Yucatán, Oaxaca, Vera-Paz, Honduras, Nicaragua, Nueva Vizcaya, Islas Filipinas y sus districtos y jurisdicciones», AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 628, exp. 5, f. 98 (impreso duplicado).

<sup>52</sup> «De la cintura arriba, y de las rodillas a los pies, con la santa cruz sobre sus hombros sacratísimos», AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 628, exp. 5, f. 98.



nest, indecent or lascivious to represent Christ in this form, nor if this kind of representation could motivate some luxurious desire in the devotee, topics addressed by the European artistic treatises of the era.

In the case of the sculpture of the Hospital de Jesús, the discussion was not prompted because the effigy was nude and obscene, but because representing the Nazarene only dressed with a loincloth would imply that Christ carried his cross to the Calvary dressed like that, which implies a great problem of historical authenticity. Thus it appears that the preoccupations of the New Spanish Inquisition were distant from the European artistic treatises in relation to nudity in art<sup>53</sup>. Nevertheless, the censure to the Nazarene complied with questions of decorum in sacred images, just as it was described in the European artistic treatises of the Counter Reformation. It was not an issue of inappropriateness to taste and morality to represent the person of Christ in this fashion, as it was allowed in other moments of the Passion. It was not because it lacked respect to his person, as the loincloth covered that necessity. More likely, it was an incorrect interpretation of the facts of the Christian history that was represented: Christ had carried his cross to the Calvary dressed with a purple tunic and so the Nazarene had to be represented. Finally, the Inquisition did not try to fully repress the public worship to the effigy in spite of the fault it presented. On the contrary, the Holy Tribunal tried to correct the mistake without affecting the extensive worship that it received in the capital of the viceroyalty and beyond. This attitude also resonates with the laws established at the Council of Trent in respect to sacred images.

Nevertheless, it is worth questioning if the New Spanish inquisitorial examiners completely focused their attention on the true representations of the gospel's facts and avoided the moral implication of the presence of nudity in a religious context, which

<sup>53</sup> For more on this topic, cfr.: ROBIN 2002, pp. 78-121.

would have been much more problematic. Maybe avoiding the question was better in order to conciliate the situation.

*Worship to the Nazarene after the Edict*

The devotion to the effigy of the Hospital de Jesús did not decline after the publication of the decree by the Holy Tribunal, and neither did copies of the images stop circulating. Here are a few examples.

In the church of San Luis de Obispo of the locality of Tlalmanalco, in the present day state of Mexico, the lateral altarpiece is dedicated to the Nazarene, and the contract of 1694 specifies that the sculpture should be «as the one that is in the hospital of Our Lady of Conception, according to the size» (fig. 7)<sup>54</sup>. This confirms that almost 30 years after the Inquisition case, the effigy of the hospital was seen as archetypal for New Spanish piety.

Another copy is an engraving dated 1716 according to the shield in the upper section of the monument that shelters the sculpture (fig. 8)<sup>55</sup>. The legend in the lower section reads: «True portrait of the miraculous image of Jesus Nazarene that is venerated in the hospital of Our Lady of Conception of Mexico»<sup>56</sup>. The print represents the effigy of the Nazarene in a fall, holding the cross with his left arm, on a plinth of different steps. The image is dressed with its tunic and holds a rope at the neck. The engraving confirms the circulation of stamps illustrating the Nazarene of the hospital at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the veneration it still received then.

<sup>54</sup> «según el que está en el hospital de Nuestra Señora de la Concepción, según los tamaños», Archivo General de Notarías, Joseph de Anaya y Bonillo, núm. 13, Mexico City, July 7, 1694, fs 91r-93v, reproduced in: VARGASLUGO 1991, vol. III, pp. 93-94.

<sup>55</sup> The engraving is preserved in the Archivo General de la Nación and comes from a 1760 criminal case. AGN, *Criminal*, vol. 716, exp. 17, f. 243.

<sup>56</sup> «Verdadero retrato de la milagrosa imagen de Jesús Nazareno que se venera en el hospital de Nuestra Señora de la Concepción de México».

An anonymous painting from 1781 represents the donation and translation of the Nazarene to the church of the Hospital de la Concepción in 1663 (fig. 9)<sup>57</sup>. The Nazarene appears in the middle of the procession, surrounded by people of different social strata of the New Spanish society that are either directly participating in the event, or are witnessing it from rooftops and balconies, on an architectural background of the city that helps the viewer situate where the event took place. The high clergy is present, depicted on the left, as well as governors and nobles, an Indian music band, as it was the tradition in this type of event, men and women that could be Indian chiefs or representatives of confraternities from the hospital, and Spanish gentlemen. Carried by priests and Indians under a canopy, the Nazarene, dressed in the purple tunic, holds the cross with his left hand, and balances the fall with his right arm and knee.

Recently, Pablo Francisco Amador Marrero identified a sculpted copy of the Nazarene of the Hospital de Jesús in Chiclana de la Frontera, Cádiz, Spain, known as the «Divine Indian», which confirms Favián's statement that copies of the Nazarene of the hospital circulated beyond the viceroyalty of New Spain<sup>58</sup>. Of small dimensions (a height of 46 cm), the image is carved in maguey wood, is fully sculpted and polychromed, and yet it is also dressed with its robe, probably to emulate the original in Mexico City. The sculpture arrived in Spain in late 1674. The tradesman Julián Cortés offered it to the female Augustine convent of Chiclana de la Frontera. Originally, the image belonged to his wife's uncle in Mexico City who had it in his private oratory. As such, the image received a limited worship, yet many miracles occurred on the ship on its way to Spain that relate to the power of the copy.

It is important to note that all of the images mentioned above reproduce the iconographical model of the Nazarene of the Hospital de Jesús, with Christ falling on his way to the Calvary.

<sup>57</sup> According to the legend in the lower right corner, the painting is a copy taken from an earlier version that was further renovated in 1816 and restored in 1963.

<sup>58</sup> AMADOR MARRERO 2011, pp. 207-261.

In all, of different artistic expressions, the sculpture is properly dressed with its tunic, as the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition established in its public edict at the end of 1665<sup>59</sup>.

I do not consider the Nazarene that is currently venerated in the hospital to be the one that originated such worship in the second half of the seventeenth century (fig. 10). The inquisitorial sanction ordered to dress the sculpture for the problematic nudity that it was presenting. The sculpture presently revered in the hospital has its vestments carved and polychromed, which completely contradicts any possibility of a problem related with the representation of Christ in the nude. It is not clear, for the moment, when this adaptation was performed<sup>60</sup>. However, this «restoration» of the Nazarene, as in many cases of devotional images, was performed precisely because the effigy still received a public worship. This situation does not constitute a contradiction in religious terms. On the contrary: because the Nazarene of the hospital was still receiving veneration it was important that it would comply with the aesthetic taste of the era to continue having an impact on the devotees.

### *Conclusion*

Alexandro Favián wanted to represent the Nazarene with a chain and dress it with a purple tunic as it was, in his opinion, the practice traditionally accepted by the Church. The authorities of the hospital advocated dressing the Nazarene with a transparent veil in such a way that «his bruised flesh» could be

<sup>59</sup> This is by no means an exhaustive list. As the work of Pablo Francisco Amador Marrero demonstrates, many images of the Nazarene hold an iconography that is related to the effigy of the Hospital de Jesús, in Mexico but also abroad. Also, there is an anonymous New Spanish painting now in Pennsylvania that can be related to the Inquisition case as it offers some transparencies in the Nazarene tunique, cfr. ROBIN 2015.

<sup>60</sup> Pablo Francisco Amador Marrero suggests the possibility that it could be the same sculpture, which would have underwent some changes through the years to meet the present aspect. Some scientific analyses are needed to confirm this hypothesis, cfr. AMADOR MARRERO 2011, p. 217.

esteemed. The answer of the inquisitorial fathers was categorical: the introduction of iconographical novelties was not admitted. In both cases, the tradition supported by the Church was seen as a powerful and convincing argument. The attitude of the New Spanish Church is in agreement with the posture of the Council of Trent and the 1642 edict of pope Urban VIII, quoted so many times by Favián, which pursued to eradicate the introduction of new themes or new ways of representing traditional topics. The chain and the bruised flesh were visual elements through which both Favián and the authorities of the hospital searched to further impact the devotee and stimulate their compunction. Nourishing devotion and piety was also supported by Urban VIII edict. Nevertheless, complying with the evangelical facts was essential.

The case of Alexandro Favián demonstrates that the requirements to properly represent religious topics in art were not always respected in New Spain though mechanisms existed to control these situations. I do not believe that this was an isolated case. It received attention as the effigy held an important public worship. Furthermore, we are fortunate to know the case in all the details of the incident – Favián’s notification to the Holy Tribunal, the discussions of the inquisitorial examiners, the intent to avoid the sanction, and the published edict, was all echoed in Favián’s epistles to Kircher. The Inquisition decided to dress the sculpture, publicly acknowledging its incorrectness. The image, far from being destroyed, deserved to be maintained for the significant public worship it aroused. The open sanction the Nazarene received did not diminish that devotion: the sculpture was a model and many copies were made to make its power accessible to others. Despite Favián’s complaints of intellectual loneliness in Puebla to his friend Kircher, the *poblano* priest used the tools in his power to share his message and in so doing participated in this movement of living images of the Early Modern globalized world.

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*Didascalie*

Fig. 1. Juan Fernández de San Pedro, *Nazarene*, ca. 1664, in Lorenzo de Salazar Muñatones, *Sermón a la peregrina, y milagrosa imagen de Jesús Nazareno, del Hospital de Nuestra Señora de la Concepción de México, del Señor Marqués del Valle. Que predicó en 7 de septiembre de 1664*, Mexico City 1664. (Photo: Biblioteca Nacional de México, Fondo Reservado)

Fig. 2. Baltasar Echave Rioja, *Jesus Carrying his Cross*, oil on canvas, 120 x 170 cm, Church of El Carmen, Puebla (Mexico). (Photo: Ernesto Peñaloza Méndez, Archivo Fotográfico del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas de la UNAM)

Fig. 3. Engraving of Jerome Wierix, according to a drawing of Bernardino Passeri, *St. Peter Cuts Malchus' Ear*, ca. 1593, 23,2 x 14,7 cm,



image 109 in Hieronymo Natali, *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia*, Antwerp, 1594. (Photo: Fondo Reservado de la Biblioteca Nacional, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General del Patrimonio Universitario: Hieronymo Natali, *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia*, Antwerp, 1594, RFO 226.07 NAD.a 1594.)

Fig. 4. Engraving of Jerome Wierix, according to a drawing of Bernardino Passeri, *Christi s Captured*, ca. 1593, 23 x 14,5 cm, image 110 in Hieronymo Natali, *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia*, Antwerp, 1595. (Photo: Fondo Reservado de la Biblioteca Nacional, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General del Patrimonio Universitario: Hieronymus Nadal, *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines*, Antwerp, 1595. RFO 226.7 nad.A 1595.)

Fig. 5. Engraving of Jerome Wierix, according to a drawing of Bernardino Passeri, *Christ is Taken Before Annas*, 23,2 x 14,6 cm, ca. 1593, image 111 in Hieronymo Natali, *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia*, Antwerp, 1595. (Photo: Fondo Reservado de la Biblioteca Nacional, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General del Patrimonio Universitario: Hieronymus Nadal, *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines*, Antwerp, 1595. RFO 226.7 nad.A 1595.)

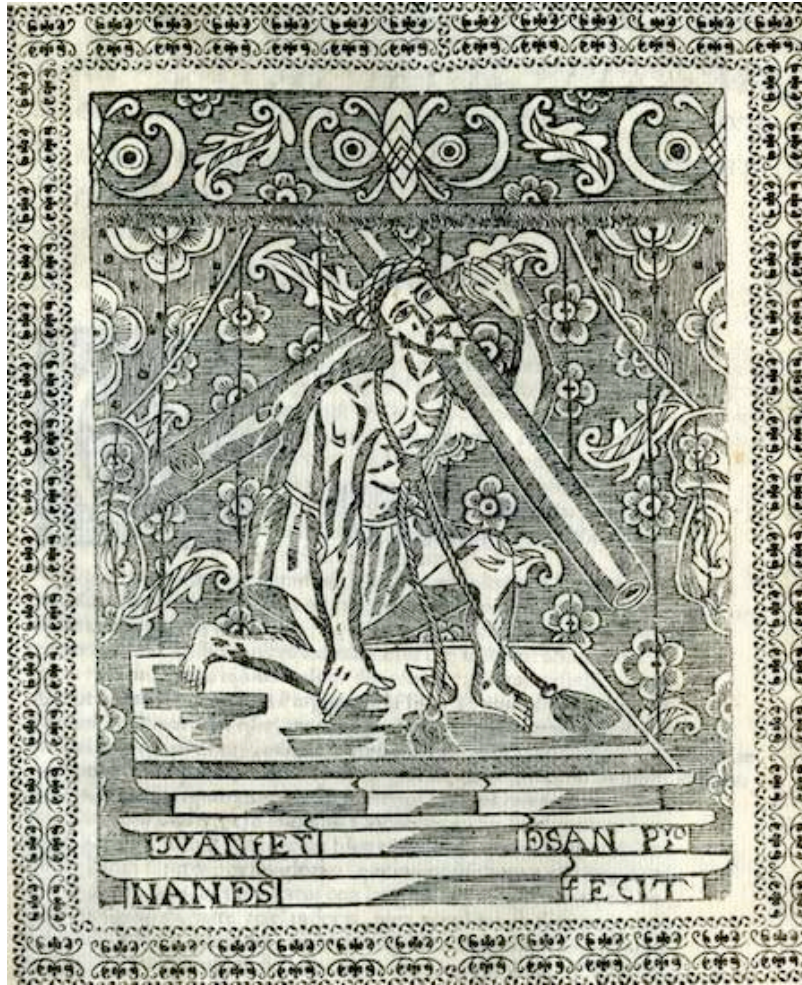
Fig. 6. Engraving of Jerome Wierix, according to a drawing of Bernardino Passeri, *Christ on His Way to Calvary*, ca. 1593, 23,3 x 14,6 cm, image 125 in Hieronymo Natali, *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia*, Antwerp, 1595. (Photo: Fondo Reservado de la Biblioteca Nacional, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General del Patrimonio Universitario: Hieronymus Nadal, *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines*, Antwerp, 1595. RFO 226.7 nad.A 1595.)

Fig. 7. Anonymous, *Nazarene*, detail, Tlalmanalco (Mexico). (Photo: Cecilia Gutiérrez Arriola, Archivo Fotográfico del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas de la UNAM)

Fig. 8. Anonymous, *True portrait of the miraculous image of Jesus Nazarene that is venerated in the hospital of Our Lady of Conception of Mexico*, engraving, 1716 (Photo: Archivo General de la Nación, Criminal, vol. 716, exp. 17, f. 243)

Fig. 9. Anonymous, *Transfer of the Effigy of the Nazarene to the Hospital de la Purísima Concepción*, 1781, Hospital de Jesús, Mexico City (Mexico). (Photo: Pedro Ángeles Jiménez y Ernesto Peñaloza Méndez, Archivo Fotográfico del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas de la UNAM)

Fig. 10. Anonymous, *Nazarene*, Hospital de Jesús, Mexico City (Mexico). (Photo: Alena Robin)





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