

# Theatre and Holy Week: The Configuration of Spanish Penitential Procession in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century

Teatro y Semana Santa: la configuración  
de la procesión penitencial española  
durante el siglo XVI

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**Abstract.** In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the first Spanish penitential brotherhoods were born, normally those of the *Vera Cruz* (True Cross) and later of the Nazarene. Their main external expression was the evening procession on Maundy Thursday or during the night to Good Friday, where from very early on stage depictions or remembrances of the Passion of Christ would appear, particularly on the way to Calvary, along with several secondary characters, such as Jews, Pharisees, Romans, etc. Following on from ancient use, the characters would cover their faces with a mask or face. Little by little, because of a certain reverential fear, the main characters, Christ and the Virgin, were eventually replaced by inanimate images. However, they continued to play their role in those sacred dramas of a folk character which were performed throughout the Peninsula, despite repeated bans from the ecclesiastical authorities. They formed a comprehensive show, a global sort of sacred performance, with an

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extraordinary visual, aesthetic and emotional impact. The present article therefore intends to establish a relationship between the earlier Holy Week processions and the remains of sacred theatre that have survived the continuous ecclesiastical bans.

**Keywords.** Holy Week; Spain; Procession; Sacred Drama; Passion Play.

**Resumen.** En el siglo XVI nacen las más antiguas cofradías penitenciales españolas, normalmente de la Vera Cruz y más tarde del Nazareno, cuya principal manifestación externa es la procesión de la tarde-noche del Jueves Santo o en la madrugada del Viernes Santo, en la que muy tempranamente aparecen representaciones o remembranzas de la Pasión de Cristo, de manera especial del camino al Calvario en las que se incorporan también numerosos personajes secundarios, como judíos, fariseos, romanos, etc. Siguiendo un antiguo uso, los personajes cubrían su rostro con una máscara o rostrillo. Poco a poco, por temor reverencial, los personajes principales, Cristo y la Virgen, acabaron siendo sustituidos por imágenes inanimadas, que sin embargo seguían desempeñando su función en aquellos dramas sacros de carácter popular que se representaban a lo largo y ancho de la Península, a pesar de las continuas prohibiciones de las autoridades eclesiásticas. Se trataba de un espectáculo envolvente, global, una suerte de performance sacra, de extraordinario impacto visual, estético y emotivo. El presente artículo pretende, por tanto, establecer una relación entre las primitivas procesiones de Semana Santa y los restos del teatro sacro que habían perdurado tras las continuas prohibiciones eclesiásticas.

**Palabras clave.** Semana Santa; España; procesiones; drama sacro; representaciones de la Pasión.

In a previous investigation I already offered some keys to understanding the evolution of the participants in the Holy Week processions in Spain, from the early sacred drama to the model observed nowadays, pointing out that in some cases ritual performances have lingered and which at times were accompanied by preaching<sup>1</sup>.

Within this evolution, which presents a curious back and forth process with respect to the sacred drama, one of its richest stages is the one which took place from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century until the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, when a typical Baroque penitential procession was completely configured. From the primitive simplicity we arrive at a great aesthetic richness, mainly configured by sacred imagery and the rites that are organized in a processional context with a clear dramatic dimension. This turns the procession into a true, complete and comprehensive show, like a performance that encompasses all the senses with the aim of turning the spectator into another of the characters represented in the «station» of the Passion.

1. Labarga García, 2016, pp. 73-122.

### 1. THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PENITENTIAL PROCESSION: A REMEMBRANCE OF THE PASSION

In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the penitential procession in the Spanish Holy Week is finally established. In its origins iconography was rarely incorporated into the processions because there were no processional stations, just a crucifix that was carried by clergies or members of a brotherhood. However, it was deemed necessary to continue incorporating passages from the Passion that might contribute to favour devotion among the faithful. This is why at first, small plays emerged that might be influenced by the ones still performed in the churches and outside them, especially during these holy days. Because it is a true fact that, despite reiterated prohibitions from prelates and diocesan synods, people continued to perform plays about the Passion all over the Peninsula, as is certified by several documents. In general, prohibitions were justified for the same reason: the lack of seriousness in those performances. For example, the synodic constitutions of Seville in 1512 informed that «in some of our churches in our archbishopric certain plays about the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ and his Resurrection are allowed [...] and as from such plays many scandals arise, we determine that the clergy shall not permit such plays neither in churches nor in monasteries without our express permission»<sup>2</sup>. In this way, the play that had been performed in the Sevillian cathedral comes to the streets and is reenacted before one of its gates around 1518, becoming a consolidated custom by 1531<sup>3</sup>.

Within the Synodic Constitutions of Mondoñedo, published in May 1541, «performances in the fashion of farces of the world» offered «by vagabond people in the holy time of Lent and the Holy Week» were explicitly prohibited because from them «many inconveniences come». Among those problems, the main ones were that the plays «say many things that are not in the Gospel and they create and cause great laughter and pleasure among those who listen to them; and as well as that, the faithful stop attending mass on Sundays and festivities to go where those plays are performed, which are not in praise, but in vituperation of Christ». Consequently, the performance of «such plays or remembrances both in the church and outside the church» as well as its attendance are prohibited and punished with severe canonical penalties<sup>4</sup>.

In any case, in many other dioceses a safeguard was introduced for those performances which were done with honesty and served to favour piety among the faithful. Nevertheless, the need for the pertinent licence was increasing, as the Sevillian Synod indicated in 1512, as did the one in the Canary Islands in 1515, because it was a fact that «in our Church and Diocese plays about the Passion and other scenes in the Gospel are performed»<sup>5</sup>. In the Synod that was held in the dio-

2. Tejada y Ramiro, 1855, p. 87.

3. Sánchez Herrero, 1995, p. 40.

4. *Synodicon Hispanum*, I, 1981, pp. 78-79.

5. *Synodicon Hispanum*, XI, 2013, p. 108.

cese of Coria in 1537 and in several others, previous censure was established<sup>6</sup>. And, little by little, the express condition that they were performed outside the churches was also introduced, as can be found in the synodic constitutions of Toledo (1580) and Palencia (1582)<sup>7</sup>.

In any case, it is particularly interesting to notice that according to the text from the synod in Mondoñedo, some scenes had also been incorporated to the processions: «And we do not wish with this provision to deprive or inhibit either the brotherhoods or the processions of the holy *Vera Cruz*, as they are usually done, but we rather confirm them, and if it is still necessary, we grant them licence once again»<sup>8</sup>.

Therefore it seems probable that brotherhoods of the *Vera Cruz*, albeit in a very timid fashion, began to add a play about the road to Calvary to their procession. We also know, for instance, that in Jubera (La Rioja) the regulations in 1533 stipulated that in the evening procession on Maundy Thursday a clergyman would go «with his alb and a hairpiece and a crown of thorns and a diadem on the head with a long cross on his shoulder» and that he would be helped by someone «following behind and bearing the name of Simon Cyrene». The regulations continued by stating that the so-characterized clergyman «represents Jesus Christ, our Redeemer». In San Torcuato (La Rioja) it was also a priest who represented Christ «with a cross on his shoulders, wearing an alb and his hair as it has always been, barefoot and very humiliated».

The fact that a priest is the person playing the role of Christ in the procession is particularly interesting. In other places, however, it was also possible that a member of the brotherhood portrayed the Nazarene. For instance, in Navalsaz (La Rioja) there was also a «brother representing our Redeemer with a red tunic and his hair and diadem, and carrying a fairly large cross on his shoulders» at the rear of the procession. Evidently, this man should be, as is explicitly pointed out in the rule of the *Vera Cruz* of Cellorigo (La Rioja), a person «of good life and habits», who has to carry the cross on his shoulders «with the utmost of humilities and decency». In this respect it is ruled that «whoever carries the Cross be a secret person and wherever convenient, two boys with tunics should escort him while saying out loud: *This is done in remembrance of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ*»<sup>9</sup>.

This dramatisation is thus done as «remembrance of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ». It coincides exactly with another one at the other end of the Peninsula, opening the procession that the primitive brotherhood of the Nazarene of Granada would organise for the night of Maundy Thursday to Good Friday: two boys wearing the Carmelite habit while proclaiming from time to time: «This is done in remembrance of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ»<sup>10</sup>.

6. *Synodicon Hispanum*, V, 1990, p. 256.

7. Vitse, 2005, p. 72.

8. *Synodicon Hispanum*, I, 1981, p. 79.

9. Labarga García, 2000, pp. 228-229 (where all the texts referring to La Rioja have been extracted).

10. Szmolka Clares, 1991, p. 448.

In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, but above all during the following century, a new type of penitential brotherhood emerged, different from the *Vera Cruz*, called that of the *Nazarenos* due to their peculiar penitence. They did not apply discipline to themselves but they would carry the cross on their shoulders along the entire distance covered by the procession, imitating Jesus of Nazareth on his way to Calvary. Abbot Sánchez Gordillo points out that at the hospital of the *Cinco Llagas* (Five Sacred Wounds) in Seville it was established

the most devout brotherhood with the name of the *Santa Cruz en Jerusalén* (Holy Cross in Jerusalem), or of the Crosses and of Jesus of Nazareth, or of the Nazarenos, because in it the brothers do not take any penitence but the cross on their shoulders. At the founding start of this brotherhood, apart from the purple colour tunics that they would wear, they would also use crowns made of buckthorns and hairpieces, which they used to cover their faces, and esparto ropes around their throats, thick and tight, from their necks to all over their bodies and waists<sup>11</sup>.

The brotherhoods of the Nazarene steadily began to include the image of Christ, either as an effigy or portrayed live by a person. In Vélez-Málaga, at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the brotherhood of the *Dulce Nombre de Jesús* (Sweet Name of Jesus) still kept a performance in its station of penitence:

On Maundy Thursday, early at night, a brotherhood called that of Jesus leaves the church of our Lord Saint John. It is preceded by a priest, with the habit and name of Christ, bearing a large cross on his shoulders and a rope around his hands and throat, from which two ministers of justice, known by the people as executioners, pull him. In this way reliving the moments when Christ our Redeemer was taken to Calvary along the Way of Sorrows. They are followed by twelve others, with their faces lit by large torches, portraying the twelve apostles of Christ; on their heads they wear diadems with the name of the apostle each portrays, with white garments and their backs exposed, from which they shed a great deal of blood with great penitential discipline in reverence to that shed by Christ for our redemption<sup>12</sup>.

The brotherhood had no image to worship. Every year, for the Holy Week procession, one of its priest members offered to play the role of Jesus of Nazareth. His «metamorphosis» would involve the above-mentioned purple tunic, the face or mask –which, according to Pezzi Cristóbal would help him «be closer to the prototype of male beauty»<sup>13</sup>, and a hairpiece on which the crown of thorns was worn and, most interestingly, the three potencies. He was helped by another brother playing the role of Simon Cyrene.

This mimetic penitence would greatly contribute to heighten the character of *remembrance* (*remembranza*) of the procession itself. Covarrubias in his *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (1611) indicated precisely that *rememorar* is to «renew and bring back to memory some remarkable past thing». In other words, to

11. Sánchez Gordillo, 1982, pp. 157-158.

12. Vázquez Rengifo, *Grandezas de la ciudad de Vélez y hechos notables de sus naturales*, pp. 117-118.

13. Pezzi Cristóbal, 2007, p. 280.

bring it up to date. An amusing anecdote might illustrate the heightened sense of realism with which the attendees of those *remembrances* perceived that the events from the Gospel came alive again before them:

They were doing the remembrance of the arrest of Jesus Christ, and perhaps they were walking along a street and he was carrying the cross, being pushed and receiving blows and punches. A Portuguese on a horse was passing by and, as he saw it he dismounted his horse and unsheathing his sword, he began to rain blows on the executioners, who fled. The Portuguese then said:

—Body of God with this ruin Castilian people!

And turning himself towards the Christ, with great anger he said to him:

—And you good man, why do you let them seize you every year?<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, due to the avalanche of visual stimuli which surrounds us in our everyday lives, it is impossible to appreciate the fascination that the imagery used to provoke in the people from past centuries to a true extent, and the emotional intensity that these performances used to bring them. Chroniclers indicate, in this respect, that villages and towns would come to a stop at the very same moment the *show* began<sup>15</sup>.

However, not always were they carried out with the due respect. It is of particular interest that Covarrubias pointed out —in the past tense— that «they used to call remembrance certain stations of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which have been justly banned»<sup>16</sup>.

In fact, as was mentioned above, synodic constitutions in different dioceses had prohibited them just a few years before. A similar situation would also take place in the Spanish territories in America, as highlighted by the acts of the provincial council held in Mexico in 1555 that banned all kinds of «performances and remembrances [...] because on many occasions inconveniences have followed from such events, and they bring us scandals»<sup>17</sup>.

Despite the prohibitions, the *remembrances* survived within Holy Week thanks to the brotherhoods. They consisted of dramatisations of the stations of the Passion with a clear mimetic character and without any texts. Among all those stations, some began to become more and more popular, like those related to the road to Calvary. In fact, the concept of station has been limited to the early morning processions on Good Friday.

A tendency towards the performance of more and more complex scenes is soon to be noticed among the brotherhoods responsible for organising the different processions for Holy Week. The case of Bilbao is of particular interest. The regulations of the brotherhood of the *Vera Cruz* arranged for the evening procession of Maundy Thursday in 1554 that

14. *Cuentos de la Edad Media y del Siglo de Oro*, p. 149.

15. Berthlod, 1974, pp. 245-246.

16. Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*, fol. 7r and v.

17. Menéndez Peláez, 2005, p. 55.

the play about the arrest of our lord Jesus Christ is performed [...] and after that, at the rear of that procession the Jesus Christ chosen by the chapter follows, carrying his wooden cross —made by the stewards and ready in the church—, and helped by Simon Cyrene, the way Jesus Christ was taken when the Jews took him to mount Calvary, and that there have to be two town criers, one taking Christ with a esparto rope from his neck, and the other playing a bugle and announcing the sentence given by Pilate<sup>18</sup>.

This station was steadily enriched, and several characters began to appear in it. We know, for example, as is stated within the regulations of the brotherhood of the *Vera Cruz* of Oñate, that it was necessary to control the procession in order to ensure that it was celebrated with dignity. So, «those bearing arms and the executioners always come along» but none of «the Jews, Pharisees or other frivolities that provoke more laughter than tears [and these] should be removed. Those participating in the station should do it as in a painting, without gestures, and with no more than one Flanders bugler»<sup>19</sup>. *As in a painting*, that is, like statues or immobile figures. Hereby the path to substitute performers with imagery is opened.

As can be observed, despite the prohibitions, plays about the Passion continued to be performed, on many occasions with all the ecclesiastical blessings, and their willing cooperation. However, in some cases such plays were not directly related to the penitential brotherhoods, but rather to chapters and parishes, convents or even councils. The only rule to be respected was that the texts and scripts had to be supervised by the corresponding authority, as would be stated in the synods held after the Council of Trent. Hence, for example, at the cathedral of Gerona the Passion was still performed in 1546, when it was stipulated that the general vicar had to review the text in advance<sup>20</sup>. A few years later, in 1566, the village of Lesaca (Navarra) was granted permission from the general vicar of Bayonne to perform a play about the Passion on Maundy Thursday, following the text *Passion Trobada*, by Diego de San Pedro<sup>21</sup>. Evidence also exists of the actions taken before the bishop of Pamplona in 1602 to obtain authorisation for the performance of a play about the Passion in Fuenterrabía during Holy Week. This permission was requested to the bishop by the Franciscan friar Mateo of Burgos, to whom the prelate informed that he would grant «the performance of the passion licence willingly as I have seen it and examined it, and there is nothing in it that clashes with our holy faith and good customs, because this has to come first». The town hall decided to intervene in order to place pressure and consequently, on 6<sup>th</sup> March, its members decided that,

due to the great devotion we have [for it] in this village, let a play about the passion and remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ be performed in the parochial church of this village on the day and night of Maundy Thursday of the present year, and in

18. Lanzagorta Arco, 2004, p. 60.

19. Lizarralde, 1926, p. 205.

20. Massip, 1992, p. 30.

21. Urquijo e Ibarra, 1931, pp. 150-174.

order to have this performance, let the main representatives undertake the due diligences before the Bishop and the curia of Pamplona and reach and obtain licence and permission notwithstanding the ones granted in this village.

In the letter to the bishopric it was alleged that:

because this village borders the province of Guipúzcoa and is near to France and there are many people on feast days and days of devotion, both from France and other kingdoms, they try to solemnise the divine services and all the festivities, and to make such people and foreigners stop and hear blessed things and about the sacred passion of our Lord Jesus Christ on Maundy Thursday, they wish this comedy or play to be performed in the parochial church of mentioned village.

They begged for the due authorisation, but it was not granted because «no performance is allowed to be done on Maundy Thursday when the Holy Sacrament is in the monument, which obliges everyone to be devoutly quiet in prayer». Following this decision, the municipal authorities insisted and requested permission for the performance to be held «on Wednesday or Friday during the Holy Week [...] because the people supposed to be performing the play have advanced a great deal and worked on elaborating their lines, and they have bought and brought from San Sebastian and from other places, costumes and all the other necessary things». Eventually, the bishop granted a licence on 20<sup>th</sup> March, once the text had been reviewed by a «learned person who says that it contains nothing against the faith»<sup>22</sup>.

Likewise, in 1604, the beneficiaries, neighbours and parishioners of Valverde del Campo (Valladolid) kept on asking for «the remembrance and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ» that had been performed in the previous six years. Among the props they rented we could find «a purple tunic to play the part of Christ». There is no trace, however, of the involvement of any brotherhood whatsoever<sup>23</sup>. Last but not least, it might be mentioned that one of the most renowned performances of the Passion worldwide takes place every ten years in the German town of Oberammergau (Bavaria). This play began to be performed in 1634 following a vow made by the people in the village when faced with an epidemic of the plague.

## 2. THE TRIUMPH OF THE IMAGE

Meanwhile, within the brotherhoods, the process of substituting the main sacred characters as living, mobile beings, that participated in the processions with their corresponding images, continued. Those characters are, obviously, Christ and the Virgin Mary. On the other hand, the rest (the apostles, Veronica, the executioners, etc.) were still interpreted live, despite complaints from the hierarchy caused by inappropriate behaviour that could be observed from time to time. This process of substitution is firstly justified by the logical respect necessary to represent the divinity, and in this way misunderstandings and a lack of decorum could be avoided.

22. Urquijo e Ibarra, 1909, pp. 331-336.

23. Rojo Vega, 1999, pp. 168-169.



There is a very enlightening remark with reference to this, albeit from some years before, when the idea of substituting actors with images was already beginning to be well received. Referring to a mystery play that was celebrated at Christmas in 1487 in Zaragoza due to the presence of the Catholic Kings in the city, when the expenses were accounted for, it was indicated that the chapter order a payment of two golden guilders to the people «playing the roles of Joseph, Mary and Jesus, who were husband and wife and son, so that the mystery and performance were more devout»<sup>24</sup>. The discomfort caused by playing the roles of the most sacred characters is clearly shown when it is sought that all be members of the same family in real life.

A paradigmatic example is the brotherhood of *Jesús Nazareno* which has its headquarters in the convent of Victory, in Málaga. In its constitutions from 1681 the existence of the stations of the Nazarene, the Virgin, Saint John and Veronica is mentioned. These were characters played in the past by brothers who were obliged to be «of good fame and opinion, free of suspicion of bad breed, so that they could do it for God's greater liking», as well as to avoid conveying a bad image, taking into account the many people from «strange kingdoms». Those performers were substituted with images that were carried on portable platforms, but the characters of Simon Cyrene and the two thieves, the penitent and the impenitent one, were kept «alive». The performers for those characters did not have to be members of the brotherhood, but the same suffrages were offered for them as if they were members, with the only condition being that they pay for the expenses of making and maintaining their costumes themselves<sup>25</sup>.

The process of cancelling the presence of a live performer and their substitution with an image probably began by means of an action as simple as providing the characters with a face or mask, in the same fashion ancient Greek rituals and theatre had done in the past, where the «general symbol of mimesis» was first introduced. We cannot forget that, as Rodríguez Adrados points out, «the mask had been used since ancient times to represent the gods»<sup>26</sup>. The hieratic stance or rigidity, the frontality and expressivity that is shown through the masks suits the sacred character that was intended to be conveyed very well, relating it somehow to the pictorial style of icons in Eastern churches, where those traits are also highlighted.

Moreover, thanks to the mask the real personality was concealed behind that of the *character*, in this way avoiding many of the inconveniences that might derive from the recognition of individuals, with their virtues, but above all, with their defects. This aspect is always highlighted in the censures of sacred theatre. In this respect, Massip states that «in the medieval religious performance it seems that the mask was indispensable to play the characters belonging to the supernatural realm

24. Gómez Moreno, 1991, p. 73.

25. Fernández Basurte, 1998, p. 289.

26. Rodríguez Adrados, 1972, p. 548.

(divine or angelical creatures, saints, devils, evil or allegorical characters), surely with the aim of neutralising the psychological expression that the performer's face unfailingly conveys»<sup>27</sup>.

Accordingly, the custom of using masks was kept in use throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the plays about the Passion<sup>28</sup>, as well as on other occasions like the procession of the Corpus, in which actors with *faces* would participate. In Valencia, for example, as early as 1412 the masks for the angels and for the character of Saint John the Baptist were renewed, as well as there being masks for the rest of the characters like Moses, among other different prophets and patriarchs<sup>29</sup>. In the area of Castile, in Guadalajara around 1454 the mending of «a title of the faces» was already commissioned and five years later, an expense for «five pounds of cloth for the faces» and a debt to the painter «of a hundred maravedis for the faces»<sup>30</sup> was entered in the books. Shortly after, in 1462, in the accounting book for the chapter of the Sevillian cathedral we can find an entry of 25 maravedis paid to Antón Rodríguez for «making a hard face» for the person playing the character of Jesus, as well as another entry for the rent of some beards<sup>31</sup>.

In Murcia, in 1471, volunteers who «wanted to be rabbis with faces»<sup>32</sup> were requested. The same thing happened in Toledo, where a great deal of the characters in those mystery plays had their *faces* or *masks*, particularly the Jews, the executioners, the devil, but also «the beheaded Saint John», the emperor Constantine and the angels. Nevertheless, this custom was contested by some synods like the one held in Ávila in 1481, in which the use of «placing other faces onto the ones given by our Lord» was condemned. This sentence would be repeated verbatim in the diocesan synod in Jaén in 1515, informing that such masks served mainly to represent demons<sup>33</sup>.

The masks «were moulded by painting masters with old cloths, paper and paste, and then oil painted». Apart from the masks, the use of beards and hairpieces is also reflected. These beards and hairpieces called «manes», «mops» or «coifs of hair» were made with hemp dyed in black, yellow or even red. Or they were made «with bristles from cow tails attached to some tight, dark-coloured canvas hoods»<sup>34</sup>. Likewise, among the expenses at the cathedral in Tarragona that were noted down because of Holy Week in 1472 we can find several entries related to plays about the Passion, called *entremesos*, that were performed between Holy Wednesday and Good Friday, probably including the use of masks for the actors.

27. Massip, 1992, p. 104.

28. Rodríguez Adrados, 1972, p. 520.

29. Shergold, 1967, p. 54.

30. Pradillo y Esteban, 2000, p. 55.

31. Sánchez-Arjona, 1994 [1898], p. 5.

32. Rubio García, 1987, pp. 85-86.

33. *Synodicon Hispanum*, VI, 1994, p. 130; IX, 2010, p. 694.

34. Torroja Menéndez and Rivas Pala, 1977, pp. 48 y 67.

Moving on to Seville, in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Holy Week, «several allegorical shapes or stations with scenes from the divine Passion on a mountain representing the Calvary. The figures were made of clay, with masks prepared by painters, beards and hairpieces of hemp»<sup>35</sup> would be placed by the cathedral's monument. Not long after, for the performance of the Passion play in 1507, an expense for three new *faces* is entered in the books, and for the one in 1516, eighteen more are purchased, including the ones for Christ and the executioners for «the station of the Passion that was made in the Monument»<sup>36</sup>.

The use of *faces* was still widespread in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, among the brotherhoods as well. In Malaga, the brotherhood of *Santo Cristo con la cruz a cuestas* (Saint Christ Carrying the Cross) was founded in March 1636. Its obligation was to take to the streets a procession on the evening of Holy Wednesday where, apart from the station of the Nazarene wearing a purple taffeta tunic, the twelve apostles with their *faces* and diadems would participate<sup>37</sup>. Similarly, the brotherhood of the Nazarene in Vera (Almería) showed its disposition to create «different live stations and the necessary *faces* that imitate those they represent for the Holy Week that will come this year»<sup>38</sup>.

Lantier, who travelled in Spain in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, reported that it was still possible to see at the Holy Week processions in Toledo «the twelve apostles with long wigs made of hemp carrying in their hands a thick book, and wearing behind their heads a mirror meaning that they would read the future; after them the most horrible *faces* followed, representing the Jews that had sacrificed Jesus Christ. They were followed by the mysteries, featuring the sacred farces»<sup>39</sup>.

The *faces* are still used in performances about the Passion in several towns in Andalusia like Puente Genil, Moriles, Iznajar, Doña Mencía, Baena, Priego, Alcalá la Real o Alcaudete. The use of these *faces* was incorporated into other processions as well, uniquely to the one for the Corpus, so that they are still worn by the apostles in Laguna de Negrillos (León) and Oñate (Guipúzcoa). In the latter, the archangel saint Michael is also using a *face*, whereas in the former, the *face* is used for saint John the Baptist and for a very peculiar saint Sebastian. Similarly, until the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) the apostles in Guadalajara used to wear a *face*.

Every character has their corresponding iconographic attribute, i.e., the symbol that serves for their identification (Saint Peter's keys, Saint Paul's sword, Saint James the Great's staff, etc.). Besides, in many cases, the name is written down in the halo or diadem around their heads, or —following the Byzantine fashion<sup>40</sup>— on a phylactery or card, as happened in the Corpus procession in Seville at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>41</sup>.

35. Rosa y López, 1904, p. 47.

36. Gestoso y Pérez, 1892, pp. 284-285.

37. Llorden and Souvirón, 1969, pp. 769-771.

38. Gil Albarracín, 1997, p. 488.

39. García Mercadal, 1962, p. 1268.

40. Réau, 2000, p. 499.

41. Lleó Cañal, 1975, p. 7.

With respect to the wardrobe, there was a movement from liturgical garments to outfits that soon became typical for each character: Christ, the Virgin, the apostles, the executioners, etc. It is worth mentioning that no kind of historicist urge existed, and no verisimilitude was sought when dressing the characters; the intention was more pedagogical and catechetical. The characters should be recognized in a simple and intuitive manner. So, Pilate should be easily identified as the civil authority, the Romans as soldiers or constables, the high priests or *pontiffs* as religious authorities, etc. In this respect Réau already referred to «the anachronistic wardrobe of the mysteries», that seemed a sort of «mirror for manners and fashions» from which only Christ, the apostles and partly the Virgin would escape. «Her classic garments –Greek peplos or Roman toga– have remained unaltered throughout the centuries. These garments of majestic folds bestow on them a character of majesty and even of eternity: time does not affect them»<sup>42</sup>.

The symbolic dimension was also important. This was highlighted by varying means, from using different colours for the garments (for example, the purple tunic of the Nazarene) to the quality of the fabrics used for the dresses and cloaks for Christ and the Virgin. Regarding this, it might be interesting to remember the controversy that already existed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century about the rightness and/or convenience of using rich garments for the images, concluding that it was appropriate «to dress the Nazarene Christ with a precious garment, and to place on him a golden rope with pearls, because as the rope is a rope, the Cross is a cross, and the tunic is a tunic, they tell and will tell the most simple-minded that Christ is suffering along the Way of Sorrows, and because they are made of gold, silk and pearls, they will also proclaim the glory of the Son of God»<sup>43</sup>.

Within this process of substitution of living figures, after the introduction of faces or masks, sacred images were directly incorporated at a second stage. These images would wear the same or similar garments to the ones used by their previous representatives<sup>44</sup>. Once the face or mask is used, this step is a logical and quick one. It consists of having a frame or structure, where only the visible parts like the face, hands and feet have been carved, and then dress them with the tunic and the cloak that already existed.

Those images continued to play the same role as before, although at that moment it was deemed necessary to provide them with movement. The simplest procedure to achieve it would also be the most extensively used: to place the images onto some stretchers to transport them from one place to the other. Evident traces of this transition still exist, such as in the image of our Lord of the Triumph that is

42. Réau, 2000, pp. 310 y 332.

43. Pérez Sánchez, 1991.

44. The images that could be dressed are not a product of the Baroque, although they were rife in that era. They had existed since ancient times. This is certified by the prohibitions, particularly those compiled in the acts of the Council of Trent, which were later repeated in the corresponding diocesan synods and provincial councils, and which intended to avoid profanity in the outfits used for sacred images. Saravia, 1960; Labarga, 2000, pp. 443-447.

still set up on a living donkey for the procession of Palm Sunday in Ayacucho (Peru). Something similar happened in the mystery play performed in Toledo in 1501; although the animal was not alive, a female donkey fabricated in 1493 was reused and to which they added a foal, «by placing its headstall and cowbell»<sup>45</sup>. In Germany and in other places in Central Europe there existed the custom of celebrating the procession of Palm Sunday with a station called *Palmesel* (palm donkey), where there was a sculpture of Jesus on a donkey that was anchored on a platform that was normally moved on some wheels<sup>46</sup>.

Later on, human inventiveness was able to develop mechanisms to provide such images with movement in their limbs. This way, the Nazarene, for example could simulate a fall or perform the gesture of blessing. The brotherhoods frequently commissioned articulated images<sup>47</sup>, particularly of the Nazarene, as is the case —just to mention the earliest examples— in Priego de Córdoba, where he gives the blessing by means of a mechanism actioned from the platform at the culminating point in the procession. In fact, a remarkably perspicacious theory has been proposed in which the reason why many images of the Nazarene have the Cross on his left shoulder is due to the need of keeping the right arm free to bless the faithful.

It is also known that during the Baroque era the deception of the senses was intended, making the real thing look artificial and vice versa. In our case, this would mean that the images look alive whereas the characters played by actors resemble statues. This is even more interesting in the eventuality that all of them interact with each other, as happens in processions where along with the sacred images, extras and actors participate and wear garments similar to the ones on the images.

To this end we can mention that devotion leads us, in an unavoidable process of anthropomorphisation, to treat an image as if it were a living being that suffers, gets tired or rejoices. Cea points out that, consequently, a complete *service* is organised around the image, with its butlers and maidens, but also with administrators for its possessions. «The image is provided with the care meant for the nobility, particularly in the clothing and the cleanliness of the chapel —its house—. [...] Within the devout person a sense of modesty towards the image is created, which has to be «dressed» with clothes and jewels, [because] it is «naked» in its sculpture»<sup>48</sup>.

When did this transition happen? With all probability during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, becoming a widespread reality in the following century. Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out that some sacred plays such as the ones about the Descent —or *davallament*— had incorporated an articulated image of Christ dead much earlier, perhaps at the very beginning, who was taken down from the Cross by other characters that were alive (Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, saint John, the

45. Torroja Menéndez y Rivas Pala, 1977, p. 67.

46. Réau, 1996, pp. 415-416.

47. Sánchez López, 2010, pp. 97-127.

48. Cea Gutiérrez, 1987, pp. 26-27, note 3.

Virgin, the women at the Crucifixion, etc.). In Toledo, the mystery called —depending on the moment— the «Piety», «the fifth Anguish» or the «descent from the cross» was performed, at least as early as in 1495, with an articulated image of Christ, as also happened in many other places and which has remained until today<sup>49</sup>.

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49. Labarga García, 1997, pp. 673-692.

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