

Public bodies, private parts: The virgins and Magdalens of Magdalena de San Gerónimo

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'Habiendo yo considerado y visto, con la experiencia de largos años,' Magdalena de San Gerónimo writes to Philip III in the early months of 1608, 'que gran parte (si no es la mayor) del daño y estrago que hay en las costumbres en estos reinos de España, nació de la libertad, disolución y rotura de muchas mujeres, sentía (aunque gran pecadora) un gran dolor en mi alma, así de ver a nuestro gran Dios y Señor ofendido, como de ver este nobilísimo y cristianísimo reino estragado y perdido'. It is, she continues, this overwhelming sorrow that moves her to write her 'tratadillo' to the King, proposing the establishment throughout Spain of prisons for women as a remedy against the 'enfermedad y dolencia' that for the past twenty years have besieged the republic (cited in Barbeito 1991: 65).¹

Very little is known about the author of the *Razón y forma de la galera y casa real que el Rey, Nuestro Señor, manda hacer en estos reinos para castigo de las mujeres vagantes, y ladronas, alcahuetas, hechiceras, y otras semejantes*; the biographical details are sketchy at best. The woman who would come to be known as Magdalena de San Gerónimo was born roughly in the mid-sixteenth century and probably died in the early part of the seventeenth, sometime after 1615; her secular name may have been Beatriz Zamudio; whether it was or not, it is likely she belonged to the house of Zamudio. She was either a nun (possibly of the order of St Bernard) or a tertiary, and she may or may not have been a Magdalen herself (Barbeito 1991: 37).² Most of what *is* known about Magdalena de San Gerónimo is directly related to her public work with public women. By 1588 she was administrator of the institution to which she would devote most of her life: the Casa Pía de Arrepentidas de Santa María Magdalena in Valladolid, a halfway-house for converted prostitutes which she not only reformed and expanded, but for which she established a Patronato (a kind of foundation) in 1605, bequeathing to it her estate and her prized relic collection, and securing for it certain royal privileges in order to guarantee in perpetuity its financial survival. She actively corresponded with Philip II's daughter, the Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia and also with Luisa Carvajal y Mendoza. It may have been in the service of the Infanta – if not of her father, Philip II, or after his death, her half-brother, Philip III – that she travelled at different moments to Brussels, Paris and Flanders; it was, almost certainly, during these trips that she obtained the relics she would eventually donate to the city of Valladolid in favour of the Casa Pía: among them, the bodies of two of the eleven thousand virgins who accompanied St Ursula to martyrdom, as well as the heads of at least twenty more.³ Although she worked primarily in Magdalen houses and establishing prisons for women, she also ministered to the sick and impoverished, tending especially to soldiers suffering

from syphilis. The last documentary trace of Magdalena de San Gerónimo is from 1615, when she was called upon to identify the body of Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, who had died in England, and to accompany her remains to Madrid, lest they run the risk – appropriate fate, all in all, given Luisa’s own penchant for body parts – of being dispersed and pirated as relics.⁴

This paper explores the relation between what are, on the surface, two very different aspects of Magdalena de San Gerónimo’s public works: the *Razón y forma de la galera*, her only surviving text (although it is conceivable that she drafted other *arbitrios* on the subject of penitential reform) and her collection of and trade in martyr’s relics. I use the intersection of two different kinds of public women’s bodies – the prostitute and the saint – that are somehow circumscribed in her work as a point of departure, imagining a triple displacement that moves, roughly, from the body of the prostitute, to the body (parts) of the virgin martyrs, and then to three other sites or bodies where the prostitute and the virgin somehow meet: the body of the Golden Age actress, the body of Mary Magdalen, and, finally, the body politic.

Before doing so, however, it may be helpful to summarize the principal arguments of Magdalena de San Gerónimo’s treatise. The text of the *Razón y forma de la galera* consists of the dedication to Philip III (cited above), followed by an introduction and five chapters or *puntos*. The first of these, ‘De la importancia y necesidad de esta galera’, presents an inventory of the different species of ‘malas mujeres’ that are, according to Magdalena, almost entirely to blame for Spain’s fast deteriorating health. The second chapter, ‘De la forma y traza de esta galera’, contains painstakingly detailed guidelines for the construction, outfitting, and administration of a prison for women, from architectural specifications (‘casa fuerte y bien cerrada [...] que no tenga ventana’) to concrete recommendations on nearly every aspect of an inmate’s life: physical appearance (‘En entrando cualquiera mujer en esta galera ha de estar despojada de todas sus galas y vestidos, y luego la raparán el cabello a navaja como hazen a los forzados en las galeras’); diet (‘su comida ha de ser un pan muy bazo y negro [...] y algún día de la semana una tajada de vaca y esa poca y mal guisada’); prescribed activities (‘Nunca han de estar un solo punto ociosas’); and so on. The third *punto* is similarly practical in the advice it offers: ‘Avisos para la justicia’, on the one hand (calling, among other things, for a nightly curfew and the detention of any wandering woman who violates it), and ‘para los ministros de la Galera’, on the other (specifying, for example, what sorts of punishments should be meted out for particular transgressions). The fourth chapter is devoted to ‘Los provechos que de esta Galera se sirven’: saving the nation, saving money, saving bodies, and saving souls. The fifth and final chapter of the *Razón y forma de la galera*, ‘En que se propone una exhortación a los jueces y gobernadores de la república’, argues for ‘rigor y más rigor’ as the only viable means of containing the infection that is spreading, unchecked, throughout the nation.

Magdalena de San Gerónimo’s text is both provoking and provocative on a number of counts, not the least of which is the way in which it might be used to question the notion of Spain’s belated modernity. If, as Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish*, the transition from the administration of corporal public

punishment (torture or execution) to private incarceration with the goal of reform can be taken as an index or marker of modernity (a transition Foucault situates in the eighteenth century for France and England), then Magdalena de San Gerónimo's treatise, advocating the incarceration, reform, and eventual reintegration to society of delinquent women, might point to ways in which that transition – or certain aspects of it, anyway – may have already been anticipated in early seventeenth-century Spain.⁵ Magdalena's outspoken advocacy of penitential reform for women and her pragmatic recommendations for how to institute that reform as a practice (recommendations that did not fall on deaf ears),⁶ point to the importance of her work both with and for public women. This should not be taken to mean that Magdalena was a champion for the rights of delinquent women; as Mary Elizabeth Perry has rightly noted, Magdalena states with pride 'that her plan had won considerable attention for its severity' *against* women (Perry 1990: 142). In her dedication to Philip III, Magdalena in fact writes: 'Como las demás cosas nuevas en sus principios, así ésta ha causado novedad y admiración, no sólo en la gente vulgar y común, pero aún en la principal; [...] teniendo el nombre y hechos de esta Galera por demasiado rigor y severidad, particularmente siendo inventada por mujer contra mujeres' (cited in Barbeito 1991: 65-6).

But what is perhaps most remarkable of the *Razón y forma de la galera* are the specific terms in which the censure of public women is negotiated. These unenclosed women, she argues, 'vagamundas y ociosas' and who support themselves 'de mal vivir', are the source of great damage or affliction to the Republic ('daño' is the word she uses) because many are 'damaged' themselves:

que como muchas están dañadas, inficionan y pegan mil enfermedades asquerosas y contagiosas a los tristes hombres, que, sin reparar ni temer esto, se juntan con ellas; y éstos, juntándose con otras o con sus mujeres, si son casados, les pegan la misma lacra; y así, una de éstas contaminada basta para contaminar mucha gente. Y cuanta verdad sea esto lo muestran bien, por nuestros pecados, el Hospital de la Resurrección y los demás, donde se toman sudores y unciones, que para cada cama hay mil hombres [...]. (cited in Barbeito 1991: 72)

Her reproach of prostitutes is founded *not* on moral or religious grounds, as one might expect, but on a language of infection and uncontrollable circulation.

This trafficking of bodies, of disease, and of currency that are the corollaries of sex work might also be used to describe the business of trading and collecting relics in early modern Spain, with only one notable difference. If the threat of the prostitute was that she could spread 'mil enfermedades' (and particularly syphilis, better known at the time in Spain as *el mal francés*, *el morbo gálico*, *el mal de Nápoles* or, most commonly, *bubas*) throughout the republic, then the power of the relic lay in its capacity to *heal* any one of a thousand ills. This, and the fact that both the prostitute's contagion and the relic's cure were thought to be effected by what might be seen as a kind of bodily metonymy – an intimate contact – are perhaps themselves the most intimate contacts between the bodies of Magdalena de San Gerónimo's virgins and whores.⁷

But there is more here. The disease that the prostitute transmits is both symbolically and discursively linked with her open body or, more precisely, with the openness of her body. This openness, characteristic of the fragmented, grotesque, and even carnivalesque body, stands in marked opposition to the closed, integral body of the virgin. The distinction, already inherently problematic, becomes almost impossible to uphold when transferred onto the bodies of Magdalena's martyrs and Magdalens. On the one hand, what the *arrepentida* stands for, as a kind of living emblem of the sacrament of penance (a sacrament attacked by Luther and, consequently, institutionalized as dogma at the fourteenth session of Trent), is the promise of an integrity of the soul, even (or especially) when that integrity is no longer available to the body. The spiritual intactness that penance re-confers takes precedence, then, over any claims of bodily integrity.⁸ On the other hand, if the virgin is defined by the integrity of her body – and this is especially the case for Magdalena's virgins: according to legend, St Ursula and her eleven thousand maids were slaughtered by Huns for refusing to surrender their virginities or to disavow their Christianity – as a relic, the virgin's body is anything *but* intact. In fact – and this is what Carlos Eire aptly terms the paradox of the relic – the more fragmented the saint's body, the greater its power to effect miracles since there is literally more of the saint to go around.⁹ The relic's efficacy, then, like its market value, is entirely independent of its size.

But there is an even more concrete relation between Magdalena's virgins and prostitutes, one that is institutionalized in the 'Constituciones' of the Patronato that Magdalena founds in 1605 in benefit of the Valladolid Casa de Arrepentidas. (And although she does not author this text *per se*, she not only figures prominently in it, but is the driving force behind it.)

Y su Majestad, movido del santo celo con que quiere la conservación de obras tan pías y públicas y en que nuestro Señor es tan servido, a instancia de la dicha Madre Magdalena de San Jerónimo y de su pedimiento, ha hecho y hace la merced a la dicha casa y obra pía de que haya y cobre en la dicha casa de las comedias de esta dicha ciudad, un cuarto de cada persona que entre a oírlas. Y la dicha Madre Magdalena de San Jerónimo con su bien cuidado y diligencia y trabajos que ha sufrido, ha juntado y recogido los bienes y reliquias de que adelante se hará mención, todo lo cual quiere y tiene por bien de aplicar y aplica a dicha casa y obra pía; y de ello hará donación. Y habiendo considerado su Majestad que en la dicha obra consiste muy particularmente el bien público de esta ciudad [...] ha sido servido de ordenar y mandar que el Ayuntamiento, Justicia y Regimiento de esta dicha ciudad, se encargue de la dicha casa y obra pía [...]. (cited in Barbeito 1991: 44)

There are a number of things that merit comment in this passage: the use of the word 'conservación', for instance, that not only exemplifies the transfer of a medical rhetoric onto a political sphere (a move consistent with the operant physiological model of the Republic as body), but which, if we believe Maravall, might be adduced as evidence of a conservative culture (or, in the very least, a culture of conservation).¹⁰ Or the various uses to which the word *public* is

submitted: the ‘*obras públicas*’ (such as the Casa Pía) which the King sanctions in spirit and in fact (that is, financially) because they contribute to the ‘*bien público*’ of the city and, more broadly, the nation (the *res pública*), next to the *casa pública* (the whorehouse) – ghost in the machine of the Magdalen house, if not of the nation as well: there were more than 800 brothels in Madrid alone by the time Philip IV reached the throne. There is a notable shift at work here. The distance or tension between these two uses of the public had previously been only an apparent one; brothels had been legal in Spain since at least the Middle Ages precisely because they were considered beneficial to the public, not only physically containing and legally regulating the threats public women represented to society but also as a kind of necessary evil, tolerated to preclude graver offenses against God or nature – *el mal nefando* (homosexuality), for example. Throughout the reigns of the three Philips, that distance becomes increasingly greater as moralists argue that *casas públicas* are incompatible with the *bien público*, regardless of any practical benefits they might afford, labelling as heresy the widely-held opinion (cited by those who frequented public houses) that, if it was paid for, fornication (that is sex between unmarried men and women) was not a sin (Tomás y Valiente *et al.* 1990: 57-89).

What I am most interested in examining, however, are the specific mechanics of the transaction that is outlined in the ‘*Constituciones*’ and what they might suggest about the politics of visual display and the containment of now at least *three* different kinds of public bodies. If not exactly in exchange for the royal privilege in favour of the Casa de Arrepentidas, then certainly in consideration of it, Magdalena promises to forfeit her relics to the city, prostituting, in a sense, the bodies of her virgins for the souls of her Magdalens.¹¹ But it is worth noting here that it is not a *casa pública* from which the proceeds benefitting the Valladolid Casa Pía were to derive, as was usually the case (and the strongest argument in favour of keeping brothels open in the early seventeenth century was, precisely, the economic one: they provided considerable income for the charitable, or public, work of both church and state), but instead from the public theatre (‘*teatro público*’, the ‘*Constituciones*’ specify elsewhere) and its *público*, suggesting yet another twist in a baroque plot: the *comedia* as the unrepentant *puta* whose profits will benefit repentant ones.

Magdalena de San Gerónimo’s pimping, then, takes place in the back alley connecting these three public houses: the whorehouse, the theatre (perhaps the real halfway house in all of this, and certainly so in terms of the financing of contrition), and the Casa Pía. *Casas de comedia* were, after all, under attack by the very same moralists and theologians who attacked the *casas públicas*, and on almost identical grounds; that is, as breeding grounds, and quite literally so, of lasciviousness and sin. These attacks, I want to argue, had everything to do with the various sorts of public displays that the *comedia* allowed (public displays that we might use – if we were to follow a different tack here – to question a Maravallian reading of the theatre as a conservative institution) and, more specifically, with the public display of the body of the actress. The 1600 *Dictamen de Fray Agustín Dávila, electo de Santo Domingo y otros teólogos de Madrid sobre la permisión de comedias*, for example, sternly recommends: ‘Que

no representasen mujeres en ninguna manera, porque en actos tan *públicos* provoca notablemente una mujer desenvuelta, en quien todos tienen puestos los ojos' (cited in Cotarelo y Mori 1904: 208). It was, in fact, the presence of the actress's body on stage that was thought to account for the tremendous popularity of the theatre in early modern Spain, as a member of Prince Charles of Wales's 1623 entourage to Madrid is quick to remark: 'The Players themselves consist of Men and Women. The Men are indifferent Actors but the Women are very good, and become themselves far better than any that I ever saw act those Parts, and far handsomer than any Women I saw. To say the truth, they are the only cause their Playes are so much frequented' (cited in McKendrick 1989: 203).

Let me go over once more, then, the arrangement Magdalena negotiates with the King, framing it this time in terms of the display and closeting of these three bodies and their assorted, and perhaps now more explicitly interchangeable, parts: the virgin's, the prostitute's, and the actress's. The move is roughly as follows: Magdalena will donate to the public the body parts of her virgins – private parts made public not only by their disinterment (necessary for their circulation as relics), but by their participation in various economies of desire, exchange, and public veneration. In exchange for this bequest, the king (whose own doubled body is clearly implicated in this trafficking)¹² decrees that a portion of the tax on the theatre – a tax imposed, in part, as a levy on *its* public display of and commerce in bodies both on and off-stage (the actress's primarily but the theatre-goer's as well) – will circulate to the Magdalen house. Those *cuartos* will in turn support the containment and reform of women whose crime had been the commerce in and public display of *their* bodies and particularly of their bodies' private parts, but whose status as *arrepentidas* was no *less* a function of commerce and public display: of their *converted* bodies, on the one hand (ostensibly made private by containment – and this is what the conversion consisted of, a kind of privatizing – but only qualifiedly so if we consider that the terms of the 'Constituciones' call for turning over the Casa Pía to public authorities) and of their converted souls, private parts of a slightly different order, on the other.

This tension between the public and the private can also be cast in terms of the movements of these various bodies through different kinds of public spaces: the *translatio* of relics over national or imperial boundaries (a *translatio* no longer fantasized as a *furta sacra*, as it had been during the Middle Ages, but understood now both as a potentially lucrative import-export business and as a divine mission: saving them from destruction at the hands of Protestant iconoclasts)¹³; the containment of the relic within the walls, so to speak, of the reliquary; the procession of converted prostitutes from the public house to the Magdalen house, a procession that had all the earmarks of a parade;¹⁴ the seclusion of unconverted prostitutes within the Magdalen house throughout Lent, on the anniversary of Mary Magdalen's conversion, and on the nine feast days of the Virgin; the incarceration of the wandering prostitute within the *galera*; the pilgrimage of bodies – and often diseased bodies – to the church (to worship the body of the virgin martyr), to the theatre (to gaze upon the body of the actress), or to the whorehouse (to enjoy the body of the prostitute); the movement of the actress's

body from one theatre to another or from one town to another (a wandering that was considered no different from that of the *puta-vagamunda*), or from off-stage to on-stage; and so on. (Any number of other spaces could be annexed here: from the *Hospitales de la Resurrección*, over-crowded with syphilis patients, to the *Escorial* itself.)

But – and to push a bit more on the relation between public and private parts – there is another kind of part that might be brought to bear here that not only engages the question of public spaces, but that condenses, in a remarkably economical way, the problematic intersection of these three public women's bodies: the parts – the roles – played by actresses. Of all the scandals ascribed to the *comedia*, the one considered most disgraceful and immoral by the antitheatrical lobby was the fact that the same actress who represented the Virgin or the Magdalen in a play (and post-Trent there is an explosion of Magdalen literature in Spain) should then appear lifting her skirts (or, worse, opening her legs) as a prostitute in the *entremeses* between the acts, sometimes without even changing out of her virginal garb. At other times this 'indecent' meeting of virgin and whore upon the actress's body was not even mediated by the drop of a curtain, but was instead the result of an uneasy confusion between the player and the part she played.¹⁵ An anonymous tract of 1620 titled *Diálogos de las comedias*, for example, states:

Sale una farsante a representar una Magdalena o la que hace y representa una Madre de Dios [...] y lo primero veréis lo más del auditorio conoce que es una ramera [...] ¿puede haber mayor indecencia en el mundo? Lo otro, acabado de hacer una Nuestra Señora, sale un entremés en que hace una mesonera o ramera sólo con ponerse una toca y regazar la saya. [...].
(cited in Cotarelo y Mori 1904: 218)

The fear of contagion here is that the *farsante*'s open body – or the open body of the *ramera* she plays – will somehow infect, by a different kind of metonymy, the ostensibly intact bodies of the Virgins or Magdalens she also represents.

The intense anxieties provoked by the actress's body and recorded in the writings of the antitheatricalists are not or at least not *only*, in the end, the result of her wandering and licentiousness, but of the blurring of distinctions that is publicly displayed (or, alternately, that *she* publicly displays) upon it. The actress is taken to task, then, for the mastery of her craft, for the seamless malleability of her voice and her body, for the repeated acts of self-fashioning she performs both on and off-stage or, to put it in slightly different terms, for so flawlessly playing a virgin when either in her (less than) private life or in her next public appearance, she is destined to play the part of the whore. There are all kinds of suggestive paradoxes encoded here, paradoxes that are in many ways inseparable from the question of permissible subjectivities in early modern Spain, of licit or illicit 'flexibilities of the self', to borrow Thomas Greene's term (1968). It is by no means incidental that each of the public women whose bodies are implicated in this kind of tangled web we have been weaving – the prostitute, the actress, the saint, even the author, to 'put the screw' on Magdalena for a change – challenge

traditional notions of a woman's proper place or of the type of agency – whether sexual, economic, religious, political, even authorial – that she should exert.

Perhaps the most salient paradox, however, has to do with the dis-membering – the forgetting – of the crucial subtext linking all these women: the myth of the Magdalen.¹⁶ Not unlike the actresses who portrayed her, Magdalen joins the narratives of prostitute and virgin, of saint and sinner – *beata peccatrix* – both of which are scripted upon her body, a body destined to become among the most valuable relics of the Roman Catholic Church. More important, perhaps, in terms of her role within early modern religiosity, Magdalen's penance constituted a flagrant act of self-(re)fashioning, as did the virtual repetition of that act by the tens of thousands of *arrepentidas* who, on the anniversary of their patron saint's conversion, repented in her name (and quite literally so, many of them adopting the name Magdalena as a marker of their contrition, which might lead to interesting speculations about Magdalena de San Gerónimo's adoption of the name). What we have, then, are no longer actresses indiscriminately playing the part of both the Magdalen and the prostitute, but now *bona-fide* prostitutes playing the part of the Magdalen, herself a prostitute, playing – for the Counter-Reformation church, anyway – the part of the saint. (My point here is not to question the sincerity of the contrition experienced by the *arrepentidas*, but only to point to the possible affinities of the various mimetic gestures involved.)

But there is, of course, one more body that is implicated in all of this. I would like to close by posing a few questions about how the public bodies and private parts of Magdalena de San Gerónimo's prostitutes and relics might be useful, or at least suggestive, in thinking about this last public body (or, more properly, body public) that has been lurking here all along: the body of the Spanish empire in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The pervasive analogy between the state and the human body in early modern Spanish political theories makes the prostitute side of the equation predictable enough, particularly if we recall that beyond the threats to social order that, as Perry has convincingly argued, the prostitute's wandering represented,¹⁷ the most immediate threat she embodied was that of venereal disease. Given, on the one hand, that syphilis was not only widespread and potentially lethal but also the source of more than a few cultural anxieties and, on the other, that the process of national and political decline was described, as Elliott has amply documented, 'in terms of a wasting disease' (Elliott 1989: 249), it is not, I hope, going too far to suggest that the line separating these two maladies may have been less than solid. What this opens up is the possibility of reading a body of Spain that is fantasized as a public woman or, more strikingly still, as a syphilitic whore. The overlapping etiologies with which national decadence and *el morbo gálico* were invested at the time support this type of claim, pointing to ways in which syphilis may have operated as a kind of shifter for different afflictions to the body politic and raising questions about the extent to which such a fantasy (of a syphilitic corporate state, for example) might have served as a critique not just of the size, shape, and condition of the body of empire but, more problematic, of the imperial enterprise itself.

What were, then, these competing etiologies? Two theories prevailed. The first was strictly providentialist: syphilis was imagined as resulting from an act of

Divine Judgment, as punishment for sins. Already in 1498, Francisco López de Villalobos (one of the very first clinicians – not just in Spain, but in all Europe – to document the new pox defines this position (which he does not subscribe to) as a theological one: ‘Dirán los teólogos queste mal vino por nuestros pecados [...] o gran providencia o juicio divino’ (cited in Granjel 1980: 210). That this language is entirely consonant with the providentialist discourse employed by political theorists and *arbitristas* to account for afflictions to the corporate state should not perhaps surprise us so much as make us question for what particular sins this national or imperial body was being punished.¹⁸ The second prevailing theory of syphilis’s origin provides one possible answer. According to this position, *el mal francés* and *el mal de Nápoles* were misnomers, since the disease was an American phenomenon that travelled back East from the New World with Columbus’s sailors. It is precisely in these terms that Sebastián de Covarrubias defines the disease in his 1613 *Suplemento al tesoro de la lengua*:

BUBAS. (Añade). Esta enfermedad cundió mucho en la guerra de Nápoles quando Carlos octavo rey de Francia se apodero de él, excluyendo a don Fernando. Pegábase principalmente por la comunicaci3n deshonesta. Los Italianos le llamaron entonces mal Francés, los Franceses mal de Nápoles, los Africanos mal de España. La verdad es que vino del nuevo mundo donde este mal de las bubas es muy ordinario, y como se ubiese desde allí derramado por Europa como lo juzgan los más avisados, por este tiempo los soldados Españoles le llevaron a Italia y a Nápoles. Mariana lib. 26, capite décimo. Zorita quinta parte, lib. 5, cap. 62. (Covarrubias: 106)

Beyond what this Columbian theory might tell us about the Othering of New World bodies or about the discursive links between this type of strategy and a rhetoric of disease – links both familiar enough and tragic enough in early modern Spain (and I should add here, if only in passing, that a *marrano* syphilis origins theory *does* arise, but not until much later in 1789)¹⁹ – it also suggests, given the sexual nature of syphilis’s transmission, that what the imperial body was punished for were its illicit consortiums overseas: the whoring, in other words, of empire itself.

But where on this vast, diseased, and even promiscuous imperial body are relics to be found? One answer might be provided by considering the relic-collecting project (Philip II’s in particular, but also Philip III’s) as somehow homologous to the imperial one. Papal bulls (such as the one conceded to Philip II in 1567 by Pius V) granting Spanish kings permission to extradite saints’ bodies from wherever they might rest in order to storehouse them at the Escorial might be seen, then, as an extension of the Papal bull that little over a century earlier had invested his great-grandparents, Ferdinand and Isabel, with what they held as inalienable imperial rights in America.²⁰ One could argue, even, that Spain mined for precious relics in the Old World as zealously as she mined for precious metals in the New. That both projects were framed (and justified) as religiously motivated is in no sense coincidental.

Another way to begin to answer the question of a possible relation between the body parts of the relic and those of empire is by considering the role of rhetoric in general and of one trope in particular. I would like to propose that synecdoche – the trope of the part for the whole (and one that early modern rhetoricians considered an instance of metonymy, moreover) is *the* trope of the relic. The relic's power is, as we have seen, independent of its size precisely because *any* fragment, regardless of how miniscule, effectively substitutes for the whole saint. Size, as far as relics are concerned, really does not matter. But synecdoche also figures prominently in arguments both for and against restrictions on imperial authority. If the model of the Holy Roman Empire had earlier provided the best defence of territorial expansionism, the new geographies (and the new cartographies) post-1492 challenged the soundness of that model. As Anthony Pagden has compellingly argued, the discovery 'that there existed an entire continent of which the Ancients had been wholly ignorant, effectively excluded the possibility that any ancient emperor could have been literally a world ruler' (Pagden 1995: 38-9). From there, it was not difficult to extend the exclusion to any contemporary emperor who made claims of world rule and authorized those claims by turning to the Roman model. Domingo de Soto's 1556 *De iustitia* calls, precisely, for limiting imperial rule to the territorial boundaries of the former Roman empire because no Emperor could literally be 'Lord of All the World', since (and what is especially interesting for us) the *part* he rules is very small in respect of the *whole*. Here size *does* matter. Of course, the best strategy for countering this sort of claim was to appeal, and quite explicitly, to synecdoche's powers of substitution. Francisco Ugarte de Hermosa y Salcedo does exactly this in his 1655 *Origen de los gobiernos divinos y humanos y forma de su ejercicio en lo temporal*. Citing Augustine almost *verbatim*, Ugarte argues that the expression 'All the World' was what was to be understood as a synecdoche (the whole – all the world the Ancients knew – here becoming the part for a *new* whole) and that, as such, it could be stretched to accommodate the swelling shape of the globe.²¹

But if, as the trope of the relic that is also put at the service of empire, synecdoche might be seen as the rhetorical trope that somehow connects relics and empire, there is at least one other way – perhaps the most compelling – to imagine that relation. It has less to do with the extent to which parts might substitute for a whole as (and turning the tables only slightly) it does with the ways in which the *disjointed* – geographically and linguistically disperse – body parts of empire might assemble to form an organic whole, a national body. And this, precisely, is what Eugene Vance terms the aesthetic of the relic: 'the passing from the apprehension of an abject fragment marked with the violence of dismemberment, roasting or flaying of human bodies, to the vision of a resplendent, resurrected whole' (Vance 1988: 172).²² In early modern Spain, this aesthetic is perhaps best understood as a national teleology, one that is, of course, already in severe crisis by the time Magdalena de San Gerónimo writes: the promise that many might become one, that multiform private parts could, in the end, assemble to form a whole, public body.

As a kind of epilogue, let me recount an anecdote that, in some sense brings together the various public bodies and private parts I have been monstrously assembling here. It concerns yet another body part: the various strands of hair of Mary Magdalen that the Cathedral of Oviedo claimed to possess and listed first among its most valued relics, sole Magdalen hairs in all of Spain. We can imagine that in his relic-collecting frenzy, Philip II would have tried desperately to get his hands on the priceless tresses in order to install them in his unrivalled collection at the Escorial (he had amassed more than 7,000 relics by the time of his death in 1598). It is doubtful that his venture met with success (the Escorial lists Magdalen relics among its saintly treasures, but their provenance is unclear); Oviedo would certainly have been hard pressed to give up its miracle-working locks. But more interesting perhaps than Philip's effort, which was entirely in character (Philip was perhaps *the* consummate Renaissance collector of both worldly and other-worldly goods), or even than its ultimate outcome, was the justification the king no doubt offered for the *translatio* of the precious strands – the very same reasons, we may assume, he gave when he petitioned the city of Santiago de Compostela to forfeit to him the body of Spain's patron saint. As Eire recounts, Philip cited not only the propriety and superiority of the Escorial as a 'hagiographic archive' (Estal 1970) – best little reliquary in Christendom – but the countless benefits the body of *empire* would derive from having its king's body in metonymous proximity to what he considered, in the end, among its most marvelous possessions.²³

But, to be not a little perverse here, I would like to suggest that this prized relic of the *Beata peccatrix* that the king longed to press against his own gout-ridden body was no more authentic than the dozens of prepuces alleged to have been Christ's or the thousands of molars of St Christopher scattered and revered throughout Europe and scoffed at by Erasmus, Calvin, and Alfonso de Valdés, among others.²⁴ This hair of the Magdalen that Philip so coveted – to heal his own body, to heal the nation's – was less likely the hair that dried Jesus's feet than it was the hair shaven from one of Magdalena de San Gerónimo's *pupilas de galeras* or the hair lost by an *enferma de bubas*, or even the hair from the wig of an actress, shamelessly playing both Magdalen and whore. Or, to give one last turn to the proverbial screw here, the hair not on the tongue but on the pen of a *pícaro Justina*, a Magdalena, perhaps, by any other name.

Notes

¹ See Isabel de Barbeito's splendid 1991 edition and study of Magdalena de San Gerónimo's *Razón y forma*, which forms the first half of her *Cárceles y mujeres en el siglo XVII*.

² See Barbeito's introduction. See also Mary Elizabeth Perry (1992), as well as the chapter entitled 'Prostitutes, penitents, padres' in her exceptional *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (1990), which includes a discussion of Magdalena de San Gerónimo. On the Zamudio family, see also the Archivo Histórico de Protocolos, Prot. 5952, Madrid.

³ The heads Magdalena trades are those ostensibly belonging to the maidens who accompanied St Ursula to martyrdom. The legend of St Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins is now treated with some scepticism; the official martyrology asserts only that Ursula and her maidens – and the exact number of maidens has long been debated – suffered at the hands of the Huns because of their chastity. The hagiography, which can be traced back to tenth-century Cologne, provides a fuller account. In his 1756-1759 *Lives of the Saints*, Alban Butler writes: 'Ursula, the daughter of a

Christian king in Britain, was asked in marriage by the son of a pagan king. She, desiring to remain unwed, got a delay of three years, which time she spent on shipboard, sailing about the seas; she had ten noble ladies-in-waiting, each of whom, and Ursula, had a thousand companions, and they were accommodated in eleven vessels. At the end of the period of grace, contrary winds drove them into the mouth of the Rhine, they sailed up to Cologne and then on to Bâle, where they disembarked and then went over the Alps to visit the tombs of the apostles at Rome. They returned by the same way to Cologne, where they were set upon and massacred for their Christianity by the heathen Huns, Ursula having refused to marry their chief. The barbarians were dispersed by angels, the citizens buried the martyrs and a church was built in their honor [...] (Butler 1994: 130). Beside the virgin heads, Magdalena had also imported to Spain the bodies of Saints Mauricio and Pascual, which she received in Flanders from the Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia and turned over to the Casa de la Penitencia and the Duque de Lerma, respectively. Both bodies were eventually translated to the Cathedral in Valladolid. The translation is recorded in Sangrador Vitores (1851).

⁴ Luisa de Carvajal's letters to Magdalena de San Gerónimo are collected in Carvajal y Mendoza (1965). There are two excellent studies on Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza: Cruz (1992) and Lezra (unpublished manuscript).

⁵ Mary Elizabeth Perry makes a similar point: 'Long before the penitentiaries that developed in the modern period, Madre Magdalena's proposal influenced public policies and promoted a gender-specific transition from corporal public punishment into private reformatory incarceration' (Perry 1992: 135). It is worth noting here that Magdalena does not perhaps go quite as far in this respect as Cristobal Pérez de Herrera, whose *Discursos de amparo de los legítimos pobres* – also of 1608 – may have served as a model for the *Razón y forma de la galera*. Pérez de Herrera's fourth discourse, 'Del castigo y reclusión de vagabundas' laments the fact that there is no civil death for women to supplement 'la verdadera, violenta y ejecutada' or that there is no middle ground between corporal punishment, which he deems ineffective in achieving reform, and execution, which he deems cruel: 'Aquí en Madrid han ahorcado poco ha a una a la cual habían dado mil y quinientos azotes en diferentes veces, sin haber escarmentado ni enmendándose, hasta que le costó la vida' (cited in Barbeito 1991: 17-18).

⁶ As early as July of 1608, court chronicler Luis Cabrera de Córdoba writes: 'Y han puesto nombre de Galera a una casa donde recogen las mozas que no quieren servir y otras amancebadas, y las mudan de vestido con un saco de sayal y les quitan el cabello y las cejas, y las hacen trabajar a la labor, hilar, coser y otras cosas que saben o las enseñan. Danlas limitadamente de comer y castigo ordinario, si lo han menester, hasta que las vean reformadas, y que darán mejor cuenta de sí que antes' (cited in Barbeito 1991: 57).

⁷ In his insightful study of death in sixteenth-century Spain, Carlos Eire documents what might be understood as a metonymous relation between Philip II and his relics: 'He continually asked for [relics] to be placed against his eyes, mouth, head and hands, driving his *relicario*, Fray Martin de Villanueva, to distraction. Philip became obsessed with them and was driven nearly mad. He repeatedly asked for the certificates of authenticity to be read to him, as well as other documents related to the translation [...] He guarded the relics jealously, carefully watching for any particles that would fall off [...]' (Eire 1995: 268). I am grateful to Carlos Eire for his generous comments on an earlier version of this paper.

⁸ What is more, the efficacy of the sacrament – the priest's authority to minister forgiveness – is *scripturally* founded on Christ's healing the so-called sick man of the palsy, where the miracle of the reintegration of the diseased body is offered as evidence of the power to forgive sins, to cure diseased souls.

⁹ See Eire (1995), especially Book II, 'The king's dissolving body: Philip II and the royal paradigm of death', and Book III, 'The saint's heavenly corpse: Teresa of Ávila and the ultimate paradigm of death'.

¹⁰ As John H. Elliott astutely observes, *conservación* is 'a word which winds its way through political literature and the records of conciliar debate in the reigns of Philip III and Philip IV' (Elliott 1989: 250). It should not surprise us, then, that it finds its way into Magdalena de San Gerónimo's penal treatise. On the relation between *conservación* and conservatism, see Maravall (1986), especially Chapter 5, 'A conservative culture', 126-47.

¹¹ The language of the soul is invoked throughout the *Razón y forma de la galera* perhaps most suggestively (and especially for a Foucauldian reading) in the fourth tratado.

¹² By ‘doubled body’, I refer of course to Ernst Kantorowicz’s remarkable and by now classic 1957 study of medieval political theology, *The King’s Two Bodies*. The notion of a doubled body is taken up by Foucault in the opening chapter of *Discipline and Punish*, but brilliantly applied to what might be called, in homage to Kantorowicz, ‘the least body of the condemned man’ (Foucault 1979: 29).

¹³ On *furta sacra*, see Patrick Geary’s important 1978 study by the same name. On Reformation and iconoclasm, see Eire (1986).

¹⁴ In a letter of 1623, Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza describes a procession of *arrepentidas* held the 10th of May of that year among ‘las cosas más públicas desta Corte’: ‘fueron en procesion cincuenta y dos mugeres vestidas con sacos de sayal, descalças, cubiertas con velos blancos de dos en dos, y con velas blancas en las manos acompañadas del Vicario general de Madrid, y de toda su Clerecia, Cruzes y estandartes; y del Corregidor y Regidores en forma de Villa, con sus porteros y maceros; estando en la puerta del Sol el Conde de Olivares, y otros Señores que llevaron al Principe de Gales a ver pasar dicha procesion’ (cited in Simón Díaz 1982: 231).

¹⁵ McKendrick cites a memorandum of 1598 in which the author, thought to be the classicizing Leonardo de Argensola, arguing in favor of keeping the ban on theatres that was imposed as part of the mourning following the death of the King’s daughter, relates how the actor playing Joseph in a Nativity play physically attacked the Virgin (the actress with whom he lived), accusing her of making eyes at a male admirer and calling her a *puta* (McKendrick 1989: 201-2).

¹⁶ A number of important Magdalen studies have appeared in recent years, among them: Haskins (1993); Duperray, Duby, and Pietri (1988); Davis (1993); Mosco (1986); and Malvern (1975).

¹⁷ For a fascinating study of the relation between unenclosed women and social order in early modern Italy, see Shemek (1998).

¹⁸ A good example of the pervasive analogy between the state and the human body in seventeenth century *arbitrio* literature is Jerónimo de Ceballos’s 1623 *Arte real para el buen gobierno de los Reyes, y Príncipes, y de sus vassallos*. Ceballos writes of the ‘similarity between the government of a polity and the human body, which also suffers from excess or natural causes; and the same thing happens to the republic, which goes into *declinación* either by bad government [...] or by natural causes [...] Your Majesty is the doctor of this republic and your vassals are sick’. Another is Pedro Fernández Navarrete’s 1626 *Conservación de monarquías*, which argues that ‘the illness [that has befallen the Spanish state] is extremely serious’. In his *Restauración política de España* of 1619, Sancho de Moncada writes: ‘Spain had changed more in the last four or five years than over the last forty or fifty, like an old but healthy man, who suddenly in the space of a few days is laid low by the illnesses which will carry him to the grave’. Mateo de Lisón y Biedma makes a similar argument in his 1622 *Discursos y apuntamientos*: ‘This sick man is Your Majesty’s monarchy’. All cited in Elliott (1989: 248-50).

¹⁹ For a comprehensive history of syphilis and its various etiologies see Arrizabalaga, Henderson, and French (1997).

²⁰ On Pius V’s papal bull and, more broadly, on the relic debate in early modern Spain, see Bouza Álvarez (1990: 35).

²¹ Pagden writes: ‘One strategy for salvaging the ancient image of empire [...] was to argue, as St Augustine had done, that “all the world” was indeed nothing more than a synecdoche, and could thus be extended to cover all the newly discovered lands and, for that matter, any lands which might be discovered in the future’ (Pagden 1995: 39).

²² As Eugene Vance insightfully suggests in his study of the relation between relics, icons and the Carolignian empire, ‘there is a clear homology in the idea of the *many* absorbed into the spiritual *one* with the idea of the Carolignian empire as a totality. That is to say, the ideological claims of Carolignianism as a discourse of unity, truth, sanctity and power are *esthetic* categories as well’ (Vance 1988: 172).

²³ Eire writes: ‘The grand design of Philip for his relic collection – and his fondest desires – are revealed by one plan that never materialized: the translation of the body of St James the Apostle, Spain’s preeminent relic, from Santiago de Compostela to the Escorial. In his initial inquiry into this possibility, Philip cited several reasons for wanting to change the location of what was arguably

Europe's most revered pilgrimage shrine, including the fear of depredations at the hands of iconoclastic English pirates or French Huguenots. His arguments primarily hinged on the issue of monarchical centralization [...] Philip also favored collapsing yet another dimension of sacrality into the symbolic center and argued that the Escorial was a more fitting place for the national patron saint, not only because of the superiority of the edifice itself, which he deemed on a par with St Peter's basilica in Rome, but also because of its intimate connection with the court. Moreover, he continued, it would be best for Spain to have its king and its patron in continuous proximity to one another' (Eire 1995: 266-7).

²⁴ In his *Diálogo de las cosas ocurridas en Roma* (also known as *Diálogo de Lactancio y un arcediano*), the influential Spanish Erasmist Alonso de Valdés writes: 'Pues desta manera hallaréis infinitas reliquias por el mundo y se perdería muy poco en que no las oviessse. Plugiesse a Dios que en ello se pudiesse remedio. El prepucio de Nuestro Señor yo lo he visto en Roma y en Burgos, y también en Nuestra Señora de Anversia, y la cabeça de Sanct Johan Baptista en Roma y en Amians de Francia. Pues apóstoles, si los quisiésemos contar, aunque no fueron sino doce y el uno no se halla y el otro está en las Indias, más hallaramos de veinte y quatro en diversos lugares del mundo [...] Dientes que mudava Nuestro Señor quando era niño passan de quinientos los que se encuentran solamente en Francia. Pues leche de Nuestra Señora, pelos de la Madalena, muelas de Sant Cristóbal, no tienen cuento [...]' (Valdés 1969: 121-5).

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