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Deities, Demons or Decoration? Asian Religions in Two Jesuit Latin Martyr Epics

Abstract: This paper explores the representation of Greco-Roman and Asian deities and demons in two Jesuit neo-Latin epics: Francesco Benci's *Quinque martyres libri VI* (Rome, 1592 [Venice, 1591]), on the martyrs of Cuncolim (1583), and Bartolomeu Pereira's *Paciecidos libri XII* (Coimbra, 1640), on the martyrdom of his cousin, Francisco Pacheco, in Japan (1626). Both poets orient to Virgil, but where Benci channels the spirit of Trent in his cautious handling of the apparatus of pagan poetry, Pereira invites us into a more florid metaphysical landscape. The Olympian gods are joined in the *Paciecidos* by the gods of Japan, as well as by personifications of the virtues and vices. A comparison of these two poems, separated by half a century, is suggestive of a diversity of approaches to divine (and infernal) machinery in Jesuit epic. A unifying element is the more didactic parsing, vis-à-vis Virgil, of the passions of the protagonists.

Keywords: Neo-Latin epic, Jesuits, Cuncolim martyrs, Francisco Pacheco (Jesuit martyr), Francesco Benci, Bartolomeu Pereira, gods, demons, emotions

Francesco Benci's (1542–1594) *Quinque martyres* (“Five Martyrs”) (Venice, 1591; revised edition Rome, 1592), a cultivar of Renaissance Christian Latin epics by Marco Girolamo Vida, Jacopo Sannazaro, and Girolamo Fracastoro, seems to be the first neo-Latin epic to set its sights on a “new world” beyond the Americas.¹ It commemorates the martyrdom of five Jesuit missionaries, led by Rodolfo Acquaviva (1550–1583), nephew of the Jesuit Superior General, Claudio Acquaviva, at Cuncolim in Southern India in 1583.² Benci himself did not see active service as a missionary but bore the

1 See Gwynne (2017) 2. All references in this essay to the *QM* are to Gwynne's edition and translation (2017). Benci's stated programme is to console his companions in the missions «whether detained in far-off America or upon the remote shores of China [. . .] fearing for your life [. . .] whatever worries beset you, whatever duties, whatever task oppresses you» by sharpening their «resolution as you imbibe courageous draughts with their honey coating. Simultaneously out brothers' proven valor will instil itself and stir your emotions with a hidden sweetness, and encourage you to hope for heaven by means of a similar death» (*QM* 1.20–35; pp. 106–109).

2 The Cuncolim Jesuit martyrs were the Italians Rodolfo Acquaviva (1550–1583) and Pietro Berno (c. 1550–1583), the Spaniard, Afonso Pacheco (c. 1551–1583), and the Portuguese Francisco António (c. 1553–1583) and Francisco Aranha (c. 1551–1583). Their Christian supporters were also slain, including two young Indian Jesuit catechumens, Dominico and Afonso. For the context, see Aranha (2006), Županov (2006), Xavier/Županov (2015) and Xavier (2011) 19–41.

“burden of the schools” as professor of rhetoric at the newly established Roman College. Given his heavy teaching and administrative load, including responsibility, from 1586, for the growing Society’s “annual letters” (a digest of the year’s activities in all the provinces), Benci’s half-length epic must be seen as something of an heroic parergon.³ While chiefly modelled on Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the Jesuits’ lodestar in Latin poetry, the poem also shows the significant influence of Lucretius’s *De rerum natura* and of late – antique and Renaissance Latin Christian epics, notably Vida’s *Christiad*.⁴

As a powerful ideological re-imagining of a critical moment in the historical encounter between early modern Catholicism and Hinduism, the *QM* is a provocative text on many levels, not least in its representation of Indian culture, caste and religion.⁵ The terms *caelicoli* and *superi*, as Gwynne observes, are reserved in the poem for Christian saints, angels and the host of heaven; the plural *dei* is used only of the Hindu gods. But do we find any hint in the epic of that famous Jesuit principle of “accommodation” to local beliefs and customs? Or, if not sympathy for the devil *per se*, echoes of Virgilian “other voices” in Benci’s characterisation of the Indians who passionately defend their ancestral gods against the Portuguese?⁶ In his description of the Hindu temple at Cuncolim at the beginning of the third book, Benci remarks its grandeur and the deep reverence shown by the common people to the Brahmans,⁷ but not before reporting that the Indians are

3 Gwynne (2017) explains Benci’s efficient, centonic method of composition; a set of student notes from his lectures on *Aeneid* 11 is preserved in the Vatican and may account for a concentration of allusions to that book in the *QM* (p. 46).

4 Gwynne (2017) finds echoes of, *inter alios*, Ovid, Lucan, Silius Italicus, Statius, Valerius Flaccus, Prudentius, Juvenius, and neo-Latin epic poets Pier Angeli da Barga and Francesco Mauri.

5 Contemporary reports of the Cuncolim massacre by Niccolo Orlandini and Alessandro Valignano constitute Benci’s main historical sources (Gwynne 2017, 690–708). I am grateful to Paolo Aranha for bringing to my attention Casanatense MS 1889, which contains illustrations of some of the religious practices described by Benci, probably by a local artist. (Benci cannot have seen it as it was held in Lisbon until 1628.) See “The Codex Casanatense 1889”, special issue of *Anais de Historia de Alem-Mar* 13 (2012).

6 For a recent review of Jesuit “accommodation”, which has its origins in a letter of St Ignatius in 1549 to Salmeron and Canisius on adapting to the “wits and affections” of those with whom they had to deal in their mission to Ingolstadt, see Prieto (2017) 395–414. On “other voices” in early modern epic, see Kallendorf (2007).

7 «There was a temple of munificent wealth in the very heart of the ancient city, surrounded by a long portico of solid marble; a noble gift of the Brahmans. India venerates these Brahmans, who are proud of their power and wealth (for they trace their origin from ancient kings), and has honored them as divine, and ordered them to defend the gods and their shrines» (*Templum erat antiquae mediis in sedibus urbis, / Munifico luxu, Brachmanum nobile donum, / Brachmanum, quos imperiis superbos / Nam regum veteri ducunt ab origine gentem / India caelestum venerata aequavit honori, atque deos, et fana deum defendere iussit*, 3.16–22; pp. 174–175). Gwynne (2017) cites a 1577 letter sent by Afonso Pacheco to then Jesuit Superior General, Mercurian, on the mis-

converging here in fear and «great uproar» (*ingenti fremitu*), like rivers rushing to the ocean, «venerating their false gods with suppliant prayers and tiring the mute breezes with their empty shouts» (*Falsaque supplicibus venerantes numina votis / Muta fatigabant vanis clamoribus aera*, 3.14–15). Where Girolamo Fracastoro, in the Columbus epyllion of the third book of his didactic poem, *Syphilis* (Verona, 1530), had envisioned Europeans observing indigenous American rituals in a spirit of respectful curiosity,⁸ Benci unceremoniously pollutes his *locus amoenus* of Hindu worshippers purifying themselves in fresh, running water with a sudden and shocking report of human (self-)sacrifice, as willing victims offer themselves to be impaled on a column of bronze: «they hang their hips where the backbone divides their legs, and oozing with gore and putrefaction they eventually die a lingering death» (*QM*, pp. 175–177).⁹ We are being primed to view the alleged death cult of the Hindus, branded “dire superstition” (*dira superstitio*, *QM* 3.33, p. 174), as a grim parody of the glorious Christian martyrdoms described (in equally graphic detail) in the first book of the poem.

The historical action and spiritual meaning of Benci’s epic is imprinted on the minds of readers as it unfolds via a series of didactic diptyches, in which Christian thoughts, prayers, ceremonies, offices, and characters are contrasted with their Hindu (per)versions. Our affective response to these portraits is guided, moreover, by the poet’s strategic evocation of classical intertexts. In the course of their fateful journey to Salcete – a passage in which Virgilian *katabasis*¹⁰ doubles as missionary manual – Afonso Pacheco, *de facto* Sibyl to Rodolfo Acquaviva’s Ae-

sion to Salcete, which Benci may have known (p. 479). Pacheco stated that they were «la gente principal, más blanca y bien proporcionada, ingeniosos y agudos» (Wicki 1964–1988, vol. 10, 983–984, quoted from Županov 2006, 17).

⁸ Significantly, the Atlantean Amerindians of Fracastoro’s third book are on the point of sacrificing the blasphemous shepherd, Syphilus, to Juno, to rid themselves of the venereal plague, but are saved from this atrocity by divine intervention: *tutatrix vetuit Iuno, et iam mitis Apollo, / qui meliorem animam miseri pro morte iuvenum / supposuere feroque solum lavere cruore* («But Juno the protector and Apollo, now appeased, forbade the sacrifice. In place of the death of the poor man, they found a more fitting victim, a bullock, and bathed the ground with the blood of this beast»), 3.361–368; *Latin Poetry*, trans. Gardner (2013) 80–81.

⁹ Paolo Aranha informs me (*per litteras*) that there is no reliable evidence for human sacrifice, voluntary or otherwise, in Goa in this period. If not here, at 3.737–742 Benci describes the devotional practice of “hook-swinging”, still practised in the region today. Cf. Aranha (2006) 151–162. On the contested presence of human sacrifice on the Konkani coast in early modern times, see Gonçalves (1957) vol. 3, 47–48 and Xavier (2011), who suggests that those who participated in the Cuncolim massacre may have understood it as a ritual killing.

¹⁰ See Gwynne (2017) 26. As if to accentuate the Stygian associations and the permeability of worlds and underworlds, Benci has Afonso explain that there used to be a ferry-man but that a toll is no longer charged (*QM* 3.439–447).

neas, informs his companion about the local geography, politics, and people. We learn that they are ruled by the Brahmans, described in terms reminiscent of Lucretius's wily *vates*. The Brahmans are arrogant but anxious about threats to their religion; they «whip up great anger in the people» and «manipulate the fickle mob with empty speeches (as when the winds mass together raindrops in the clouds floating across the sky) and stir up trouble everywhere» (p. 195).¹¹ But Afonso also concedes that they are *intellectuals* who «inquire into nature's secrets and produce what they have found for an uneducated public, and indicate the direction they must take; if won over from this blindness, the Brahmans could be good leaders, like someone who has lost his way and come upon a gaping ditch, but has changed direction, and has not stumbled over in his madness, dragging headlong those following behind; thus both avoiding a double ruin» (p. 195).¹² Benci's Brahmans, then, are not simply Lucretius's fear-mongering ancient priests reanimated, they are constructed as *antitypes* of the learned but true-God-fearing modern Jesuits.¹³

When we first meet Rodolfo Acquaviva he is languishing in the spiritual doldrums at the court of the Mughal emperor, Akbar.¹⁴ After much anguish and meditation he is transported to heaven in a dream, where his guardian angel consoles him with visions of the grisly deaths of the early Christian and English martyrs. If the angel's arrival recalls Mercury's in *Aeneid* 4, his appearance is not as it were, «out of the blue». The Jesuit's fervent prayers have given off an odor pleasing to heaven (1. 82), and his yearning for martyrdom is described in a long prelude to the visitation, redolent both of Dido's passion for Aeneas and of Virgil's georgic bees, ready to lay down their lives for their king. Jesuit scholastic readers will have been prompted to

11 The Brahmans are compared to bats, who cannot bear the light (of Christianity): «shunning the daylight [they] chose dark hiding places, where many clouds had gathered, and finally settled upon this place [sc. *Salcete*]» (p. 197).

12 See Trento (2018) 91–121 for later, more nuanced, Jesuit views on Brahmanical culture.

13 Similarly, at 6.554–579, the ekphrasis of a lost painting by Ascanio Dudoni of the ecstasy of St Francis seems to answer the portrait of the hypocritical ascetic in book 5.96–106: «In this place there is a pitiable race of men [sc. *yogis*]. Yet the wretched Indians admire them and honor them with great titles. They are believed to be gods who have come to live on earth because they wrap their foul bodies and bristling limbs with ragged clothes and wander among the deserted mountains living an austere life upon the roots they have torn up» (p. 377).

14 Structurally, at least, Akbar functions as the poem's Dido. In the fourth book, Acquaviva complains to his companions about his fruitless religious dialogues at the Mughal court. Where Aeneas had recounted his adventures to the rapt Carthaginian queen, Rodolfo narrates the life of Christ to Akbar – to no avail. Impatient for spiritual fruit, he finally escapes, resisting the emperor's gifts and pleas to stay. On this mission, see, most recently, Coello de la Rosa/Melo (2023) 16–40.

ponder the very nature of such supernatural revelations, recalling Ignatius's rules for spiritual discernment.¹⁵ Acquaviva's rapture may owe something to the *Somnium Scipionis*, and the angel's commentary to Anchises' on the parade of Roman heroes in *Aeneid* 6, subliminally preparing us for Benci's Tartarean temple at Cuncolim.¹⁶

At the beginning of the third book Benci transports us to a gloomy cave in the inner recesses of the temple, where the Hindus worship their «monstrous» and «foul-smelling» gods (3.36–41). The poet guides our attention to the darkness, smoke, perfume, shrieking and clapping of the devotees, effectively inviting us to «compose the place» and «apply the senses» as per Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*.¹⁷ In this lascivious inferno, boys and young girls – reminiscent of the lost souls of Virgil's limbo – mingle with old men and married women: *Ipsius ante adyti fauces caecumque cubile / Agminis horridi, Stygiarum lustra ferarum, / Permisti senibus pueri, nuptisque puellae* («At the entrance to this sanctuary, the dark lairs of this horrific swarm, the haunts of these hellish beasts, old men and boys, maidens and married women» (3. 49–51; p. 176–7).¹⁸ The identity of these «Stygian beasts» is ambiguous. Benci's verses onomatopoeically mimic the ritual dance with their plosive «ps», almost conjuring the spectre of a hybrid demonic organism. Is the poet referring here to the heathen idols, or their frenzied, animalistic worshipers, black-chested and half-naked? (*Pectora nigri omnes, nec operi vestibis omnes, / Inguinibus tenus (albenti nam cetera lino / Membra tegunt) vario suspendunt corpora saltu*)?¹⁹ («All black, naked

15 Cf. the conversation between the Jesuit Provincial of Goa, Rui Vicente (1523–1587) and [the martyred] Rodrigo, which, as Gwynne (2017) points out, alludes to *Aen.* 3.294–343.

16 Via the Lucretian window allusion to *Aen.* 6.724 at *QM* 1.305: *Principio*. But cf. Gwynne (2017) on the allusion at *QM* 1.254 to *Aen.* 1.495, of Aeneas in Juno's temple at Carthage (*Obtutuque haeret longum defixus in uno*) (p. 420).

17 «Like that infernal place and those accursed doors that administer punishment to the guilty under a dark night, they bristle with perpetual shadows and a gloomy light» (*non secus infernae sedes, scelerataque claustra / Quae poenas solum exercent sub nocte profunda, / Perpetuis horrent tenebris, ac lumina furvo*, 3.46–48). Cf. Ignatius's meditation on Hell in the *Spiritual Exercises* (First Week, 5th Exercise).

18 Benci's attentive students will have caught the verbal echo of, and moral contrast with, the female martyrs praised in book 1.465–471: *Sic Christi exemplum, et vestigia magna secuti, / Permistique viris pueri, castaeque puellae, / Supra annus, corpusque (animos sensusque viriles / Namque gerunt) animas in aperta pericula mittunt*.

19 Again, there seems to be a memory of Fracastoro's poem: «As it happened, there was just then a holiday in those parts, as the natives prepared to perform their annual rites in honor of the Avenging Sun, within the shady forest. In a hollow cave, upon a green riverbank, a large crowd of select people, all mingled together, men and women, nobles and commoners, young and old, stood in sadness, their wretched bodies covered in scabs and oozing pus. As they lay about, a priest, clad in white vestments, touched them with pure water and the wood of the leafy guaiacum tree» (trans. Gardner 2013, 73–75).

down to their waist (for they cover their lower limbs with a white shift), [they] leap and jump about”, 3. 52–4)

It is, in fact, a demon that has inspired this frenzied confluence,²⁰ not the Hindus’ dog-faced, tiger-chested, and snake-tailed idol/deity, which they vainly entreat to turn on the foreigners, to roar, extend its claws, and spit poison.²¹ Their prayer, as on other occasions in the poem when Benci allows us to hear the (muted) protest of the rebellious unconverted, is futile; their god is powerless, indeed *lifeless*. The fallen angel, “Phorbus”, has been engaged in a long-standing battle for the souls of the Indians.²² Catching wind of the Jesuits’ mission, he issues his own blood-curdling prophecy, «stirred up by rabid anger like a wounded stag, he turns his wild eyes here and there, his horrible mouth flecked with bloody foam, and belching fire mixed with black sulphur, spat out these words in hellish tones» (*QM* 2.392–397; p. 161). Disguised as “Battus”, he approaches the elderly priest, “Phialtes”, warning him of renewed threats to the local gods; he then fans the anger of “Alexindas”, the poem’s (wholly unsympathetic) Turnus.²³ As Gwynne (2017) points out, Phorbus’s snaky physical incarnation recalls Virgil’s Alecto, and his first speech tracks Juno’s opening harangue against the Trojans (p. 50). Phorbus’s machinations are no mere mythological pretext for the Indians’ cultural hostility to the missionaries, however. Nor, indeed, does this demon appear to be a local deity in Virgilian dress. Benci elevates historical events to the cosmic plane by casting the encounter between Christian and Hindu as a supra-temporal battle between God and the rebel angels for redemption of the world.²⁴

20 «The grievous frenzy of the demon has wounded and stung them with bitter fury. Roused from the borders of their homeland, they rush together from all Salcete and fill the temple with screaming and prayers that the winds then whirl through the void» (*quos grave vulnifici percussit daemonis oestrum / Tristibus accendens furiis, e finibus omnes / Exciti patriis, propere Salsethidae tota / Conveniunt, templumque altis clamoribus implent, / Et votis, quae mox rapiunt per inania venti*, 1.60–64; pp. 176–177).

21 Xavier (2011) 27–28 notes that the goddess Shantadurga, by turns peaceful and bloodthirsty, had a temple and cult at Cuncolim which was affiliated with that of Mahadeva, a South Indian form of Vishnu. Benci’s descriptions of the god of the temple and festival do not convincingly match her iconology, however. Gwynne (2016) 12 wonders about an allusion to the cobra festival of Nag Panchami.

22 See especially *QM*, pp. 159–166, for Benci’s carefully observed study of anger’s power both to impede and erupt into speech.

23 “Battus”, Gwynne suggests (2017, p. 472), may be a reference to a local term for Brahmins, and of course Alexindas is a calque for “best of the Indians”. As for “Phialtes”, could there be a subliminal association with the archetypal Greek traitor, Ephialtes?

24 It is tempting to see a symbolic significance even in the contrast at the beginning of book 5 between the two Salcetan towns, the godly Orlim and the recalcitrant Cuncolim, and see them as reflections, respectively, of Augustine’s Earthly City and City of God.

The Hindus' rejection of the Christian cult is framed, not as pathos-inspiring historical resistance to the religion of a colonial oppressor, but as a perennial and diabolical revolt against the one true God.²⁵ Even less than in Virgil can the supernatural machinery of Benci's poem be reduced to "veiled naturalism".²⁶ The Christian God, angels and rebel angels are *real* presences and agents in the *Quinque martyres*. Conversely, Benci does not concede any power or even fictional existence to the Hindu gods.²⁷ As such, *pace* Phorbus's lies to the Brahmans, they cannot enjoy even interim temporal success in the battle for the soul of India. Nor, for that matter, is there room in Benci's Tridentine epic for even the *decorative* presence of the Muses or Olympian gods.

The third book climaxes in a raucous Hindu festival (3.589–777), since «the godless people of Cuncolim, [have] postponed their gods' sacred rites for many days [. . .]» (*At Coculinorum gens impia, sacra deorum / In multum dilata diem* [. . .]). The paradox *impia / sacra deorum* almost certainly recalls Lucretius's preamble to the sacrifice of Iphigenia: «on the contrary more often it is that very Superstition which has brought forth criminal and impious deeds» (*quod contra saepius illa / religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta*, 1.81–83). The Jesuit poet proceeds to pique the curiosity of his readers/future missionaries by specifying the different costumes of men and women, young and old, and of the different castes (shepherds, fishermen, hunters, farmers), and distinguishing the comportment of the haughty Brahmans from that of the bellicose Naires. In the climactic revelation of the hybrid animal god himself, tottering on his terrifying float, Benci reprises and amplifies the theme of human sacrifice.²⁸ The *tour-de-force* of ethnographic ekphrasis is designed to inspire

25 Cf. German Jesuit Jacob Masen's "Miltonian" *Sarcotis*, first published in the third part of his *Palaestra Eloquentiae Ligatae* (Cologne, 1657).

26 See Feeney (1991) 163–169, refuting such interpretations of Amata's possession by Allecto.

27 The insensibility of the Hindu idols is forcefully reiterated by the martyr Aranha when he is hounded to worship a statue by the murderous crowd: «Madman, do not hope to escape our hands. Only this image, once it has been venerated, will give you safety.» "Pitiable crowd," exclaimed Francisco, "whom face, feet, eyes, ears and hands of rock make a laughing stock, it will never hear, or speak, nor see anything, nor walk anywhere, it cannot do anything" (*QM* 5.1079–1085, pp. 342–345). Just so, the children of Japanese noblewoman and convert, Gracia Hosokawa, refuse their father's demand that they worship "fotoke" in the Jesuit musical drama, *Mulier Fortis* (Vienna, 1698), by calling him a "stone", "just wood", "a demon from Hell", and "not a god" (Act 2, scene 5).

28 There are those who «spear their entrails with a sword and slice their limbs with its blade and take delight in inserting the point so that their blood flows endlessly [. . .] and their life slowly ebbs away through many channels»; others who throw themselves under the wheels of the cart; others who «provoked by wicked Furies [. . .] at the doors of the great temple, they hang suspended from the spokes of the column and draw out their life in a funeral rite. The Indians' under-

both wonder and horror, no doubt, but also, through the kaleidoscope of Lucretian allusions,²⁹ to induce us to associate Hindu polytheism with ancient paganism at its most primitive and irrational. It is no accident that the noisy public spectacle of the Hindu festival is immediately followed by the reasoned, private prayers of the Jesuit brothers, their introspective review of sins, confession, (moderate!) self-flagellation, and celebration of Mass in preparation for the trials to come.

To a much greater extent than in the *Aeneid*, in fact, the “action” of Benci’s poem transpires internally, in the despondent, fearing, doubting, swelling, hopeful, and finally determined hearts of its protagonists. And just as he tracks the edifying emotions of his Christian heroes, the poet repeatedly underlines the anxieties and excessive passions of the Hindus, passions which cloud their reason. With the exception of the wise, old Codrylus, whose counsel of restraint is rejected by the contemptuous young warriors,³⁰ the people of Cuncolim are consistently portrayed as angry and vengeful.³¹ Alexindas is chief of the young hot-heads:

always ready to stir up trouble, start a fight, launch an ambush or rebellion [. . .] like a bucking horse that despises the reins, he cannot bear bridle or crop [. . .] Often consumed by uncontrollable rage, this man had regularly incited the mob to arms. He was the first to enter the fray, last to leave the fight. He was always planning some crime or other. (*QM* 2.561–567; p. 169)³²

The *QM* is, then, as much as a hagiography of the Cuncolim martyrs, a *psychomachia* between Christian emotional clarity, charity and cheek-turning – especially at the point of torture and death – and the confused, turbulent emotions, above all rage, which possess the Hindus.

standing is so weak that they are driven to such wickedness by their impious superstition» (*QM* 3.723–742, pp. 210–211). *Impia religio potis est suadere malorum* ~ Lucretius *DRN* 1.101.

29 Primarily to the description of the procession of Cybele in *DRN* 2 and her maddened priests. See Gwynne (2017) 510, on *QM* 3.658–776, who also notes an allusion to the raving Dido (*Aen.* 4.300–303) at *QM* 1.661–667.

30 Gwynne aptly compares this episode with Nicodemus’s speech before Caiaphas and the Hebrew elders in Vida’s *Christiad.* 2.151–215 (*QM*, p. 606).

31 Simmering anger is attributed to the courtiers of Akbar – which, however, the mild Muslim Emperor keeps in check. Interestingly, Queen Elizabeth of England – a country «not more remote in the world than in custom from blessed Italy» – is described as being «driven mad by the monstrous affliction of the Furies, and her inflamed lust for ruling unjustly», in terms again reminiscent of Amata’s possession by the Fury Allecto (*QM* 1.576–581, pp. 134–135).

32 Idal Khan (= Ali Adil Shah I, sultan of Bijapur (r. 1558–1579)), the Muslim ruler of the Bahmani state which bordered Salcete, is introduced by Vicente as *atrox*; he is later blamed by Berno for surprise attacks on the Christian churches and is compared to a wolf attacking and withdrawing to the mountains after slaughter; a sudden hailstorm that flattens crops; a swelling sea threatening to flood cultivated fields; and a snake sleeping through winter (*QM*, p. 193).

On one occasion, it is true, the Jesuits themselves seem to have exceeded the bounds of righteous anger, when the zealous Berno reminds his comrades of his earlier desecration of Hindu shrines:

“Are we going to that place (on behalf of those wretches, whose minds are enmeshed in such great error!)”, exclaims Berno with his heart racing, “where we smashed the shrines and images of their mute gods in broad daylight, and enveloped the odious altars in smoke, and laid everything round and about to waste with firebrands?”³³

The continuation of these lines, in which the Jesuit boasts about his slaughter of a sacred cow, is difficult to read. But if we, from a post-colonial vantage point, are bound to view Berno’s actions as cruel and inflammatory, a more than reasonable motive for the Indians’ hatred of the Europeans, Benci does *not* allow us to view them as morally disordered. Indeed, Berno’s ardour is promptly commended by the Jesuit provincial, Rui Vicente (1523–1587), and his anecdote is met with (ill-omened) laughter from his companions.³⁴ Through careful patterning of contrasting episodes, epideictic speeches, authorial interjections, and especially through his spiritual running commentary on his heroes’ thoughts and emotions, Benci leaves us in no doubt as to whose side we are meant to be on.³⁵

Benci’s spiritual semiotics are for the most part unambiguous. As readers we proceed through the *QM* with the benefit of the poet’s God’s-eye view. Our freedom to think “other-wise” is constrained – not only to hear the “other voices” of the Hindu characters, but even to regard the massacre at Cuncolim as a humiliating, if temporary, defeat for the Christians. The heroes’ «happy . . . deaths» (*felices . . . obitus*) are foretold in the first line; at 5.636–728 God convenes a heavenly

33 The sacrilege perpetrated by Berno is corroborated by contemporary reports, as is the grisly retribution exacted on him at Cuncolim. Benci’s account is less explicit, though, than that of Alegambe (1657) 119, who says he was fed his own genitals while dying (*QM*, pp. 629–631). Cf. Henn (2014) 61.

34 «We ripped open its stomach, tore out its entrails and threw them into the marble pool before the temple doors, where they were accustomed to bathe themselves before attending their sacred rites, and we bloodied those fountains with black gore. It did not help the wretched beast that she had been regularly invoked in prayer, had harmed her own worshippers, or that she had an ancient temple and altar decorated with paintings, when she defiled the images of the gods with her own miserable death, or when the sad animal was sacrificed at her own altars. The cow collapsed, pouring out a river of hot blood from her stomach, yet I consecrated this right hand with such blood» (*QM* 2.273–283, p. 155). The passage is reminiscent of Lucretius’s sacrifice of Iphigenia, e.g. *Nec quicquam miserae . . . profuit* (*QM* 2.277–279) ~ *nec miserae prodesse* ... (*DRN* 1.93).

35 There is an unsettling parallel in Benci’s comparison of Christ’s delivery by Pilate to the Jewish mob, who delight in torturing him, to the sacrifice of an innocent young bullock (*QM* 4.812–816).

council to approve the martyrdom of the Cuncolim five, to the delight of St Ignatius and the first companions. From Acquaviva's vision of the early Christian and English martyrs in book 1 to his radiant, posthumous appearance to Vicente in a dream in book 6 (410–454; pp. 368–371), Benci's divine mouthpieces guide and reassure us. Consolation and resolve is granted directly to the Christians through divine revelations, via angels, dreams, portents, and prophecies. Thus Acquaviva is directed to journey to Salcete by the aged Portuguese provincial Vicente, through whom, we are told, «the Lord was accustomed to [speak] as a conduit of his lofty will whenever he wished the brothers to be guided by a human voice». And Berno is possessed by a prophetic spirit when he foretells the martyrdoms that are to come:

“O that I may be allowed to wipe out that undeserved honor from those wicked images, and destroy those abominable cults, although the price be bloodshed, my blood will not be worth so much; believe me, fathers, great rewards are waiting at a small price [. . .] Salcete will never devote itself completely to Christ; it will shine when compost has been spread; summer will never come for this ripening harvest unless the fields are soaked with our blood”. (QM 2.290–303; p. 155)

Berno's fiery prophecy³⁶ is capped by Vicente's ardent prayer for the toppling of the pagan religion, which is compared to an ancient oak tree, the upper branches of which steal the light, ready to fall under the axe.³⁷ If the Christians are guided by God through His agents, angels, dreams and visions, the Hindus are *misled* by demonic forces and fickle *Fama* and are prone to see false signs or misinterpret true ones. Thus the sight of swans on a beach being torn apart by a flock of crows and scattered on the sea (5.425–458; p. 311) and an eerie dust storm (5.480–505; pp. 312–315) are wrongly interpreted by their augur, Myndius, as foretelling their victory over the Christians.³⁸ Their “superstition” makes them vulnerable to infil-

36 His speech is supernatural kindling for his companions: «He stopped speaking and the fire left his eyes and the ardor his whole face. Yet Rodolfo was inspired and keeps turning over in his anxious heart the visions he had recently seen and heard in his sleep»; *Haec fatur, et ignis / Ex oculis, totoque ardor absistit ab ore / Rodolphum incendens, memori qui pectore versat / Quae dudum in somnis audire et cernere visus* (QM 2.312–315; pp. 156–157).

37 QM 2.324–331. The model, as Gwynne (2017) points out *ad loc.*, is the simile at *Aen.* 2.626–630, where Troy is compared to a tottering ash tree.

38 Shortly before their martyrdom in book 5, the Jesuits notice in the distance, on the edge of the forest, «one of the mystics whose prophecies the people of Cuncolim were accustomed to obey. These men pretend to voice the oracles of the gods and implant foolish ideas in their minds. Indeed, he was raving wildly, shaking his body and rolling his eyes around in his crazed head, snatching up dust and throwing it in the air [. . .]» (QM 5.740–746, pp. 326–327). Ironically, the false prophet correctly “predicts” their imminent ambush and deaths.

tration by the demon, and their surrender to the passions of pride and especially anger prevents them from seeing the “reason” of the Gospel.³⁹

On arrival in Salcete, Acquaviva is immediately startled by what appear to be rainbows flashing in the sky; these turn out to be a flock of colourful birds. Our hero can hardly believe that this beautiful natural environment is inhabited by such barbaric men, but Berno reminds him that, before the coming of Christianity, this forest was infested with ravening and venomous beasts (*QM* 3. 475–483).⁴⁰ While it is natural to assume that he is referring to wild animals, it becomes clear that Berno is in fact referring to demons. As the companions proceed to Cuncolim, the sky darkens and they witness an «incredible portent» (*mirabile monstrum*), «as when the clouds press close together, the sky reveals various forms and presents the shapes of wild beasts»:

*Tartarei hic uolucres, miris simulacra figuris
Monstrorum et facies obsceno corpore reddunt.
Hic Sphinx horrida, et flammis armata Chimaera,
Gorgoneum hic monstrum, diris hic feta colubris
Hydra nocens, Harpyia rapax, et Scylla biformis,
Turgidus hic Python, triplicique immanis hiatu
Cerberus, ac uario concretæ semine pestes.
Illic Geryones, Polyphemi, magna gigantum
Corpora, Centaurique truces, tristesque Megaerae,
Et Lamiae epoto ducentes sanguine uitam.
Omnibus his uertex saeuos pro crinibus angues
Erigit, horrendum, rutila stant lumina flamma,
Et trahitur spisso sinuosa uolumine cauda,
Ventosaeque patent humeris nigrantibus alae.
Scilicet et uersat celeri per inania motu
Corpora turba leuis, Stygiisque excita cauernis
Certatim properat Coculini uisere pompam.*

Here, winged creatures from hell, and images of monsters with incredible shapes, restore their appearance in their repulsive bodies. Here the dreadful Sphinx, and the Chimaera armed with fire; there the monstrous Gorgon, here, the poisonous Hydra, having newly

³⁹ When an arrogant yogi arrives at the repurposed Hindu temple at Margao, he is *infuriated* at the sight of Christian altars, candles, and worshippers, and even begins to froth at the mouth. A gesture of friendship from the local priest results in sudden conversion and expulsion of the demon (*QM* 5.136–142, pp. 294–297).

⁴⁰ The appearance of parrots may be an homage to Fracastoro’s *Syphilis*. When Columbus’s men shoot parrots, sacred to the sun, their leader utters a terrible prophecy, in imitation of the Harpy Celaeno in *Aeneid* 3.

brought forth deadly snakes, the greedy Harpy, twin-shaped Scylla, swollen Python and huge Cerberus with his triple maw, and other hybrid creatures. There were Geryones, Polyphemuses, the great bodies of giants, and savage centaurs and bitter Furies, and the Lamia who live by drinking blood. All had savage snakes on their heads for hair, horrific to behold, and their eyes are fixed with fiery flame; they drag their huge tails in numerous coils and unfurled wings adorned their black shoulders. This fickle crowd, stirred from the caverns of hell, whirl their bodies swiftly through the void and were obviously hurrying to visit the procession at Cuncolim. (*QM* 3.569–586, pp. 202–205)

At one level, of course, this unsettling vision serves as spiritual inoculation for the target audience of Jesuit scholastics against the seductive colours and sensations to which we will be exposed in the description of the Hindu parade. The cloud simile implies insubstantiality, and we may recall Lucretius's comparison of cloud shapes to monsters at *DRN* 4.134–140. The catalogue itself recalls Virgil's Underworld (*Aen.* 6.285–289), a topos revisited, as Gwynne notes *ad loc.*, in several Renaissance Christian Latin epics, including Vida's *Christiad* at 1.143–146. Perhaps the beginning of Vida's second book is also at play at the edges of Benci's imagination. There the infernal cohorts escape from Hell on the eve of Christ's betrayal, settling on towers and temple roofs, hanging from rafters, some creeping into bedchambers and causing «manifold dire dreams to sleeping souls, thus deluding human hearts with false semblances», others taking on human form to inflame the city with evil rumours (*Christiad* 2.22–64).⁴¹ But by having his classical monsters hasten to a festival which culminates in the appearance of a “god” *combining the forms of tiger, dog and snake*, Benci seems to want us to conclude that the rebel angels are *literally* – albeit supernaturally – manifesting themselves to the Indians in these (hybrid bestial) forms.⁴² That the Indians' idols are, in fact, *animated* statues is suggested by Benci's description of the god's float, in which the reader almost shares in the intoxicated double vision of the devotees:

a large group of gods sits upon the back wheels, displaying the monstrous countenances of abominable beasts as they show themselves to the multitude [. . .] the float goes along teaming with wild monsters, a dire spectacle, and threatens to topple as it shudders and overawes. (*QM* 3.709–723; pp. 210–211)

⁴¹ Trans. Gardner (2013). This Vidan passage seems also to have influenced Benci's account of Phorbus's infiltration of the hearts of the Hindus.

⁴² He will have assumed from his reading of Church Fathers such as Tertullian and Lactantius that demons appeared to the pagans of antiquity as their gods. On the associations between demons and idols in late antiquity see Barbu (2022) 389–418, Borgeaud (2010) 80–95, Vercruysse (2005) 117–128.

But what is actually going on here? Are the Indians seeing *effigies* of their gods, imagining them to be sentient, or real demons impersonating them? Given the baseline intertextuality with Lucretius's description of the cult of Cybele it is quite possible that Benci is *also* remembering St Augustine's account of the festival of the Great Mother.⁴³ Indeed, having personally witnessed these orgiastic celebrations as a young man in Carthage, Augustine reflected in older age on how feeble souls, in the context of prayer, sacrifice, and mass veneration, might come to believe that senseless idols were alive and breathing.⁴⁴ Benci seems to hedge his bets as to whether the Hindu idols are "possessed" by evil spirits, but at the very least he suggests that the people of Cuncolim have summoned up very real demonic forces.

Pacheco versus the Passions

It is *prima facie* curious that so few post-Bencian Jesuit epics commemorate modern, let alone Jesuit, martyrs.⁴⁵ Bartolomeu Pereira's *Pacecidos libri xii* (Coimbra, 1640) is a glorious exception.⁴⁶ Pereira, professor of Scripture at Coimbra, celebrates the mission and martyrdom in Nagasaki (1626) of his cousin, Francisco Pacheco, in his aspirationally Virgilian poem, published in the year of the Society's first centenary.⁴⁷ In fact, the *Paciecid* heaves with marvelous creatures and alle-

43 *De Civ. Dei* II. 4–5. Augustine's emphasis on the sexual immorality of the rites of the Great Mother may find a distant echo in Benci's Bacchic simile: «not only the mob rages, excited by horrific monsters, but also the nobles of ancient stock, the priests in their linen robes, and the Naires. The whole crowd was singing frantically, jumping about, and shaking their heads; you would have thought that, upon the command of Bacchus, the Bacchantes were conducting an orgy» (*QM* 3.661–666; pp. 206–209, my emphasis).

44 Thus MacCormack (2006) 629, quoting Augustine, *Epistulae* (CSEL, vol. 34), ed. A. Goldbacher (Vienna: F. Tempsky 1895), 102, 18.

45 Were the Society's (epic) poets perhaps hesitant to impute the ultimate rewards of spiritual heroism – beatification and canonization – to figures not yet "processed" by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and ratified by the Pope? But see Döpfert (2022) 57–83 on Japanese Jesuit martyr *dramas*.

46 Gwynne (2017) suggests that Pereira followed the precedent of *Quinque martyres* in having his own poem culminate in the reception of its eponymous hero and eight companions in paradise (*QM*, pp. 101–102). Klecker (2002) 105–106 (n. 25), on the other hand, has proposed Maffeo Vegio's Renaissance supplement to the *Aeneid* as the model (death and apotheosis of Aeneas); and for the triumph at the end of the poem, Scipio Africanus in Silius Italicus's *Punica*. For an introduction to Pereira's poem, with book synopsis, see Urbano (2005) 61–95.

47 *Marone cantamus Chorididascolo* (unnumbered preface to reader). Klecker unwinds the subtle Virgilian thread that runs through Pereira's epic, which extends even to the imitation of half-

gorical figures, which are as reminiscent of late-antique and even vernacular epic, especially Camões, as they are of Virgil.⁴⁸ We encounter weeping mermaids, an army of dragons, a cruel emperor who descends to Hell, a maddened governor and his beautiful daughter, kindly Japanese peasants and “Amazons”, tattling nobles and scheming *bonzes* (Buddhist monks). A tangle of plot twists and subplots, analepses and prophecies, conversions and apostasies, hagiography and fantasy, the *Paciecid* is a tour de force and was published in the context of a ferment of centenary festivities and self-congratulation by the Jesuit order – yet not long after their Japanese project had faltered.⁴⁹ Pereira’s baroque overkill even runs to two divine councils: a Christian one and a Japanese one, under the premiership of “Xaqua” (i.e. Shaka Buddha). In short, we find ourselves in a much more florid and fabulous metaphysical landscape than that of Benci’s *Quinque martyres*. The supernatural cast of Virgilian epic – e.g. Vulcan favouring the Japanese, Neptune the Portuguese⁵⁰ – is joined in the *Paciecid* not just by the Christian God, angels and saints, but by Japanese Buddhist and Shinto deities, a bespoke guardian angel of Japan, and a host of personified virtues and vices.⁵¹

Near the beginning of the poem “Japponiel”, the *angelus custos Iapponiae*, intercedes with the Christian God on behalf of the Jesuit missionaries, playing Virgil’s Venus to Jupiter in book one of the *Aeneid*. He complains *inter alia* about the altars of Amida running with sacrificial blood – a travesty, of course, of the non-violent cult of Amithaba Buddha, who was primarily worshipped by the Pure Land sect. In a parallel scene of supplication, “King” Amida beseeches Vulcan (again, in Venusian form) to destroy Pacheco’s boat, which is returning to Japan.⁵²

lines. The *Paciecid* begins not with the departure of the hero from his homeland or arrival in Japan, but with his flight by sea (Klecker 2002, 101).

48 On the influence of Camões, see Urbano (2005) 80, 83.

49 The ultimate *sakoku* (“closed country”) law was issued in 1639, forbidding Portuguese ships from Japanese ports and any trade with Christian states.

50 Vulcan (representing the fires of Hell) responds to a request by Amida to oppose the Portuguese by supplying a thunderbolt to burn their ships. In book 5 the poet appeals to Apollo for courage and sight to sing about the sufferings of the Christians imprisoned in the dungeon of Shimabara.

51 I am grateful to Rômulo da Silva Ehalt, Akihiko Watanabe, and Linda Zampol D’Ortia for their advice on Japanese religious terminology.

52 *Ast ubi conspexit tenebrarum ab sede profunda / Rex Amida illusos astus, atque irrita Amoris / Tela, nihilque sibi fraude hac prodesse . . . / Inde pio questu, & precibus sub nocte rogaes / Urgentem incudes, fulmenque ignesque trisulcos / Tudentem, & rigidos stimulantem voce sodales, / Vulcanum aggreditur, tristisque hæc voce precatur. / Fabrorum decus Ignipotens, flammæque furentis / Regnator, rerum afflictus, pressusque ruinis / Ad te confugio, & supplex tela ignea posco. / Ipse vides, Vulcane, vides quot vulnera, quotque / Jesuada quondam strages Iapponie sub alto / Ediderint, quantoque illos Cubosama labore / Expulerit, nostrisque ferox eiecerit oris. . . (p. 30).*

But if the god of fire should refuse, Amida challenges him to «direct all your rage, and at the same time your furious fires, against me [. . .] that I may perish; overturn and destroy my temples, burn my idols to the ground, and let the proud name and ancient honour of Amida be exiled to distant altars» (*Vel rabiem, cunctosque simul Vulcane furores / In me verte ignis, peream, mea templa ruinis / Subuerte, exure effigies, nomenque superbum, / Atque Amidae decus antiquum procul exulet aris*, 1640, 30). Amida has something of the petulance of Aristaeus invoking his nymph-mother in the *Georgics*; but are Pereira's Japanese gods all pale shadows of Virgil's pagan ones? How faithfully does he represent the religious landscape of early modern Japan?

The indigenous *Camii* (*kami*) and Buddhist *Fotoques* (*hotoke*) are frequently collocated and remain largely undifferentiated as to their cults and powers.⁵³ “Xaqua”, glossed in the index as “King of the Japanese, whom they venerate among their chief gods”, is almost a cartoon character, petty and sulky.⁵⁴ He convenes a council on the volcanic Mt Unzen⁵⁵ and upbraids the minor gods for their laziness in permitting the defection of the Japanese to the Jesuits. Needless to say, he exhibits none of the equanimity of the historical Shaka, but there may be a sarcastic allusion to Buddhist “detachment” when Pereira has him exclaim: «*May I return happily to my paternal gods and the temples of our Sion. But that labour [i.e. stopping the Jesuits] will weigh on you, not me!*» (*Lætus ego patriosque lares, nostrique Sionis / Templa adeam, non me, sed vos labor iste grauabit*). It is, moreover, tempting to see a sly reference to meditative chanting in the conclusion to Xaqua's speech: «he says these things and tearfully strikes the twin peaks of the mountain with his sceptre, and, groaning sadly, murmurs with his mouth» (*Hæc ait, & montis ferit dua culmina sceptro / Cum lachrymis, & triste gemens obmurmurat ore*). Unlike Benci's Phorbus, however, who interacts directly with the human characters, Xaqua leaves the dirty work to his underlings. Chief among

53 In the poem's index they are identified simply as “gods of the Japanese”, conflating Shinto deities (*kami*) with Buddhist saints and statues (*hotoke*). Zampol D'Ortia *et al.* (2021) 78 (n. 43) point to the *Summary of Errors*, completed around 1560, as an important Jesuit source for Shinto beliefs, though «[t]he *Sumario* is somehow unusual in presenting the followers of the *kami* as a separate group from the Buddhists [. . .]».

54 *Rex Iapponum, quem inter divos praecipuos ipsi venerantur*. Pereira is aware of the Great Buddha at «Nara, where there is a crazy temple to Xaqua, and a statue greater than the Colossus, but the earth groans equally under its weight»: *Nara, / Qua Xaquae templum insanum, majorque Colosso/ Effigies, at aequae gemit sub pondere tellus* (p. 46).

55 An appropriate venue for Pereira's “Underworld” council, since it is surrounded by hot springs.

these is the aged *hotoke* “Roncharus”,⁵⁶ who reassures the assembly that a Japanese Judas, Chusamonus, will betray Pacheco (with a little help from Allecto . . .).

In his description of the Japanese deities as landscape features and seismic forces, Pereira seems (at least dimly) aware of the animistic nature of the Shinto religion. True, most of the names in his roll-call of the idols are made up.⁵⁷ Some, however, may allude to the major *kami* or their attributes:

The ugly shades convened: Abagon and Ullon, Chrisonos, and Ferrenus, the first father of black iron, and Borcandus, Avon, Taricanta, Faredos, and loquacious Roncharon, and Abeno, huge of nose,⁵⁸ and Tisson, and Fumasus the father of fumes, and Uston. Here too comes Curvassus, whose hunched back has the form of a mountain, and he greets the earth with his lower chin. Also present is Achamonus,⁵⁹ for whom the altars of a hundred vast temples smoke, and Chromius, proud in hearths and incense, and Oros with his servant Fenus, and sad Nifranus: all shaggy with curls, wearing dusky robes. Onolinus comes, together with Bonzaius – he is the source of the name and race of the *bonzes* – and you Varel-las, who boasts of founding the sacred temples [*varelas*] on this soil, with his right hand, and of teaching the hymns and prayers, and rites of the gods.⁶⁰ Cleaving to his side is his companion Achus, his body frozen with shivering cold, and gloomy Monos, and pale Iro, aged Iro, his limbs completely covered with a flowing robe, in which mice have taken up residence, in a hundred rooms. And other horrible [gods] hurry there, their necks and shoulders adorned with snakes, and their shaggy beards are stiff with horned serpents, and sulphur blazes in their eyes and their mouths with flames.

*Conueniunt umbræ informes, Abagon & Vllon,
Chrisonos, primusque nigræ ferruginis author
Ferrenus, Borcandus, Auon, Taricanta, Faredos,
Roncharonque loquax, nasoque immanis Abeno,
Et Tisson, fumique parens Fumasus, & Vston,
Huc quoque Curuassus, gibbum qui tergore montis
Instar habet, mentoque solum propiore salutat:*

⁵⁶ Possibly a mangled form of “rakan”, the Japanese term for “arhat” (one of the protectors of the Buddha).

⁵⁷ “Ferrenus” < *ferreus*, “iron”; “Fumasus” < *fumosus*, “smoky”; “Curvassus” < *curvatus*, “crooked”; “Uston” < *ustus*, “burnt”; “Oros” < *Gk oros*, “mountain”. “Abagon” may recall “Abaddon”, the Hebrew angel of the abyss. A word search of “Data Collection of the Research Project Interactions Between Rivals: The Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan (c. 1549–c. 1647) edited by Ana Fernandes Pinto and Linda Zampol D’Ortia” does not yield any likely candidates for Pereira’s demons/deities.

⁵⁸ Was Pereira aware of the long-nosed “Tengu” spirits? And might “Iro” bear some relation to the agricultural deity Daikokuten, traditionally accompanied by mice, and worshipped as the god of Mount Miwa in the Nara prefecture?

⁵⁹ The Shinto god of war, ‘Hachiman’?

⁶⁰ “Varela” is a Malay/Javanese loan-word for temple or idol. I am grateful to Romulo Ehalt for directing me to Dalgado (1919–1921) 405–406.

*Hic & Achamonus cui centum ingentia fumant
 Templa aris, Chromiusque focus, & thure superbus,
 Atque Oros, seruiusque Fenus, tristisque Nifranus,
 Crinibus hirsuti, furuisque in vestibus adsunt.
 Venit Onolinus, cui se Bonzaius addit,
 Nominis ille author Bonzani, & gentis origo.
 Tuque Varellasi, cuius se dextra Varellas
 Prima solo fundasse sacras, & cantica iactat,
 Atque preces, ritusque deum docuisse priores.
 Huic comes horrenti concretus frigore corpus
 Hæret Achus, tristisque Monos, & pallidus Iro,
 Iro senex, longoque artus contextus amictu,
 Quo nidum, & centum posuere cubilia mures,
 Horribilesque alii properant, ornata colubris
 Colla, humerosque gerunt, rigidis hirsuta Cerastis
 Barba riget, sulphurque oculis, flammae ore relucet.*

The clash of water (Neptune/ the Jesuits) and fire (Vulcan/ the Japanese gods) is a sustained metaphor for the battle between good and evil in Pereira's poem.

Carlota Urbano has noted the absence of any direct intervention by the Christian God in the action of the *Paciecis*, even if He does convene councils, console the angel of Japan, and welcome the martyrs into heaven in the final book. As she points out, Pereira is careful not to attribute any divine visions or revelations to his hero that might be mistaken for being historical.⁶¹ Indeed, rather than by apparitions of Christ, the Virgin, or even of saints and angels, the plot of the poem is advanced through spiritual battles between various personified virtues and vices. Marco Girolamo Vida had included a handful of such allegorical figures in his *Christiad*, which have an Ovidian (and for that matter Virgilian) pedigree,⁶² but their deployment in Pereira's epic is more widespread. "Love of Life", "Purity", "Blind Love", "Fame", "Vainglory", "Faith", "Heresy", "Piety", "Impiety", and "Constancy" fight over the souls of the protagonists. In contrast to the personifications of Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, for example, these figures interact directly with the human actors. It is tempting to view this feature as connected to the greater development and diffusion of Jesuit school drama by the time of the poem's publication.⁶³ Jesuit plays were populated with such personified virtues, vices and pas-

61 «[T]he inclusion of prodigious facts, whether real or imaginary ones, in the biography of the "candidate" for sainthood would clash with the papal decrees of Urban VIII concerning beatifications and canonisations» (p. 84, n. 33).

62 E.g. the terrifying monster "Fear" in *Christiad* 5.309–325. Cf. Lowe (2008) 414–434.

63 In the prologue to Johann-Baptist Adolph's Japanese-themed Jesuit musical drama, *Mulier Fortis* (Vienna, 1698), the singing parts of Rage and Cruelty attempt to topple the pillar of Con-

sions, which – often via musical *intermedi* and the use of emblematic props – provided a moral and spiritual commentary on the historical action. Klecker has drawn attention to the sufferings of the Japanese church as a favourite theme.⁶⁴ The figure of “Constancy” who, in the eleventh book of the *Paciecis*, hands our hero the obligatory ekphrastic shield – here foretelling the triumphs of the Jesuit martyrs – was especially associated with this Japanese sub-genre.

Conclusion

It would be foolish, of course, to extrapolate any general formula for the treatment of pagan gods/non-Christian religions in Jesuit Latin poetry from just two case studies. Nevertheless, a comparison of Benci’s and Pereira’s epics, separated by half a century, suggests a diversity of possible approaches to divine and demonic machinery by Latin poets of the order. It would seem that any lingering Tridentine scruples about poetic appeals to the classical gods — scruples that may have stayed Benci’s hand — have evaporated by the middle of the 17th century. And while both poets associate Asian religion with the forces of evil, the supernatural apparatus of Pereira’s epic is almost decorative by comparison with Benci’s, where the rebel angel “Phorbus” is more fully realised as a demonic agent. On the other hand, the implicit *psychomachia* of Benci’s *Quinque martyres* becomes explicit in the *Paciecis*, probably as much through the growing influence of Jesuit drama as of the epic tradition.⁶⁵ While Benci had also invoked, e.g., personified “Hope”, he does not deploy allegorical figures to the same extent as his Portuguese successor. Where our two Jesuit epicists converge, however, is in their careful tracking, and didactic dramatising, of the thoughts and passions of their protagonists.

stancy but are fettered by Restlessness and Repentance. A reliable English translation of this play is provided by Cole (2015) as an appendix to her doctoral dissertation.

⁶⁴ See e.g. Weber (1997). The presence of Japanese themes in early modern Jesuit drama is the subject of an ongoing research programme supported by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Neo-Latin Studies, the Austrian Science Foundation, and the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science. See: <http://neolatin.lbg.ac.at/past-conferences/japan-jesuit-stage>.

⁶⁵ A century later, the passions, ranged into classes of “mild” and “violent”, featured as allegorical actors and *de facto* gods in a twelve-book didactic poem, *De motibus animi* (Paris, 1741), by French Jesuit journalist and celebrated translator of Greek drama, Pierre Brumoy. See Haskell (2018) 43–62.

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