Martyrological Torture and the Invention of Empathy: Gallonio's Treatise on the Instruments of Martyrdom and Its Reception in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Jetze Touber
Utrecht University (The Netherlands)

j.j.touber@uu.nl

Abstract:

The *Treatise of the Instruments of Martyrdom* (Italian version 1591, Latin version 1594), published by the Oratorian priest Antonio Gallonio (1556-1605), textually and graphically conveys the hundreds of ways in which persecutors tormented martyrs. It constitutes a clinical and, above all, technical reconstruction of machines used to torture Christians. Yet it was not the horror of blood and gore, nor the pleasure of pain, which Gallonio aimed to impress upon the readership. The underlying message was rather the victory of the impassive faith in God over the ingenuity and inventiveness of engineers. This martyrological machine theatre, however, lost its efficacy as subsequent generations put the work to their own use in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Gallonio's mechanistic imagery was appropriated by art theorists. Meanwhile, his antiquarian scholarship fed into the juridical and historical fortification of the edifice of the Church. Gallonio's treatise became a sterile reconstruction of juridical torture. To early Enlightenment thinkers, including Pierre Bayle (1646-1706), the work came to exemplify the cruelty that the Church of Rome seemed to exalt. The legalistic antiquarianism which appropriated Gallonio's scholarship around 1700 offended a new sensitivity which shunned salvific violence: from a spiritual exercise the treatise became an aesthetic aberration.

Key-words: Antonio Gallonio; Martyrology; Devotion; Engineering; Judiciary; 16th Century; 17th Century; 18th Century

INTRODUCTION

A remarkable representation of torture is the *Treatise of the instruments of Martyrdom* by the priest Antonio Gallonio (1556-1605) (Gallonio, 1591; Gallonio, 1594). It is the martyrological work *par excellence*: it combines systematic reconstructions of the instruments used to torture Christian martyrs with graphic depictions of those instruments at work. The thoroughness with which the author has thought through the effect of every torment imaginable and the candidness with which the artists have rendered those torture methods, make this an unsettling book to a modern readership. This paper will argue, however, that such a response has its roots in an aesthetic criterion for judging torture originating in the Enlightenment, which was not yet applicable in Gallonio's time.

First the cultural parameters which inspired Gallonio to publish his treatise on the instruments of martyrdom will pass in review. In the subsequent sections some instances of the reception of the treatise in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries will show how in that period Gallonio's originally unified martyrological project broke down in various strands. The reception of Gallonio's treatise in the subsequent 150 years transformed it, from an ascetic meditation, into a juridical study of cruelty. In its new guise as a straightforward inquiry into legal torture, this paper argues, it exemplified the religion that the Early Enlightenment rejected as an aesthetic perversion.

GALLONIO'S TREATISE: MACHINERY OR TORTURE?

In the final decades of the sixteenth century both Protestant and Catholic parts of Europe were saturated with the recollection of confessional violence of the past decades (Gregory, 1999; Lestringant, 2004). Among Catholics, the violence

perpetrated against their coreligionists in Northwestern Europe seemed a revival of the cruelties committed against the martyrs they venerated. Renewed interest in the martyrs of the early Church sparked off an outpour of martyrological texts and images (Gregory, 2000).

Prime examples of scholarship addressing the fascination for the documentary and material vestiges of early Christian martyrdom came out of the circle around Filippo Neri, the well-known Florentine priest who founded his Oratory as a pastoral initiative in the capital of the Catholic Church. The most eminent scholars associated with Neri's Oratory were Cesare Baronio, the church historian and chief editor of the *Martyrologium Romanum* that appeared from 1582 onward; and Antonio Bosio, the famous explorer of the Catacombs whose *Roma Sotterranea* was edited posthumously (1632) by the Oratorian Giovanni Severano (Ditchfield, 1997; Ditchfield, 2000; Ghilardi, 2003: 7-15; Guazzelli, 2005; Tosini, 2009; Gosselin, 2009; Ditchfield, 2012; Guazzelli, 2012a; Guazzelli, Michetti, Scorza Barcellona, 2012)[1].

Gallonio's *Treatise of the Instruments of Martyrdom* was a peculiar contribution to this martyrological interest. In terms of scholarly rigour, scope and size, Gallonio's output was no match for the volumes that his more famous contemporaries produced (Cistellini, 1989: I, 787-788). But at the same time it was extraordinary in its candid exposure of martyrological torture. The priest published an Italian edition in 1591 and a Latin edition in 1594. The Italian edition had forty copper engravings, designed by Giovanni Guerra and executed by Antonio Tempesta. The Latin edition, while more voluminous and with a more sophisticated scholarly apparatus, had illustrations which were both fewer in number and of poorer quality. Still based on Guerra's designs, they were executed in wood by Leonardo and Girolama Parasole (Pupillo, 1995a; Pupillo, 1995b). Nevertheless both editions managed to integrate text and image in a highly suggestive representation of the breaking, burning and maiming of the bodies of Christians.

What, exactly, did Gallonio want his treatise to evoke? Various interpretations have surfaced over the past decades. A straightforward interpretation of his reconstructions of ancient torture methods attribute them to the budding interest in Christian archaeology of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Fremiotti, 1926: 77-83; Cecchelli, 1938: 16, 18; Gasbarri, 1957: 28; Bovini, 1968: 33-34; Finocchiaro, 2005: 90). Another obvious context in which Gallonio's work finds a place is anti-Protestant polemics, condemning the violence that heretics perpetrated against Catholics in Northwestern Europe (Prosperi, 1992; Gregory, 1999: 281). A third strand in historiography emphasizes the devotional motivation of the study of martyrs. In this interpretation the reconstructions of torments should guide the reader's mind to the contemplation of the martyrs who underwent them (Zuccari, 1981: 90-91; Camporesi, 1985: 164-165; Ditchfield, 1995: 85-91; Ditchfield, 1997; Mansour, 2005).

Despite these diverse interpretative frameworks, most historians agree on the sensual effects of Gallonio's work. Piero Camporesi, for instance, called the treatise «a handbook on sacred and sadistic know-how» (Camporesi, 1985: 164-165). According to Brad Gregory, it had «gory depictions […] of martyrs suffering virtually every conceivable torture and form of execution» (Gregory, 1999: 281). Opher Mansour sees the treatise transform in the Latin edition into an enjoyment of cruelty, as evinced by the title of his article *Not torments, but delights* (Mansour, 2005: 179-190). Massimo Leone draws attention to the treatise's «precise and shocking descriptions of the violence» inflicted on Christians (Leone, 2010: 212). These and similar characterisations presuppose that Gallonio intended his treatise to evoke a sensual experience in his readers, proportionate to the pain that persecutors attempted to inflict on their victims. The words used («sadistic», «gory», «shocking») also imply that modern historians condemn Gallonio's manner of elaborating the diverse methods of maltreating the bodies of Christians.

Surely it may be possible to suspend judgment and consider Gallonio's theatre of torture as an instance of the 'transcultural' tendency of turning the biological experience of pain into a culturally meaningful performance, without the derogatory undertones (Glucklich, 2001: 3-10). Yet even such a more generous approach is inadequate, in that it still evaluates Gallonio's project predominantly in terms of

[1] The bibliography on the Oratorian engagement with martyrology and sacred history is vast and here only a selection of recent studies has been cited.

pain. At the outset the focus of the priest lay not so much on the feeling, suffering and enduring of pain. Rather he meant his reconstructions of martyrological torture to convey the superiority of impassiveness over ingenuity.

It is the contention of this paper that, in the initial Italian edition at least, Gallonio meant his treatise to draw attention to the 'instruments', rather than to the 'torture' of martyrdom (Camporesi, 1985: 164; Fragonard, 1987; Codognet, 2002: 43-44; Lestringant, 2004: 149). It was only the in Latin edition of 1594, that the focus shifted, from the invention of machines, to the juridical application of torture. The treatise's subsequent reception in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries confirms this transformation. In that period the mechanistic imagery of the engravings, central in the Italian edition, exerted fascination for reasons unrelated to Tridentine devotion. Meanwhile the scholarship enshrined in the Latin edition circulated among antiquarians who sought knowledge, not edification. This, in turn, parallels a broader development in which the allegorical expressiveness of martyrological torture lost out to its plain, juridical interpretation.

THE VANITY OF TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

In his competence as Oratorian priest, Gallonio heard the confessions of highly placed citizens. He had the offspring of several aristocratic Roman families under his spiritual care: notably the Crescenzi and Massimo families, as well as members of the Orsini and Vitelleschi families (Zuccari, 1981: 93-94; Bonadonna Russo, 1983; Ditchfield, 2001). The *Treatise of the Instruments of Martyrdom* addressed these aristocratic penitents. The survey of torture instruments was itself an instrument of devotion, designed for the edification of the young social elite of the Eternal City.

The aristocratic penitents of the Oratorians tended to assert their family reputation in violent conflict, both privately in feuds, and as participants in the wars that were tearing Europe apart. The nobility was aggressive and bellicose in its pursuit of honour. It was also in the avant-garde of European military technology. Italians serving in foreign armies were famed for the design of fortifications, siege machines and artillery (Fosi, 1992: 74-75; Brunelli, 2001; Fosi, 2002: 115-117; Hanlon, 2003: 7, 69-86). The dynastic ambitions that found expression in this proclivity to aggression, ran counter to the humility that the Oratory strove to teach their followers. Little wonder that Gallonio appealed to the expertise in which his readership excelled: the technology of violence.

It was in this period that technological innovation became valued. New inventions competed with the classical past in fascinating the elites. The ability to navigate the oceans, the destructive power of cannons and the unmatched distribution of knowledge effected by the printing press inspired the idea that mankind could make progress in its achievements (Rossi, 1962; Zilsel, 1972: 130-134; Bernsmeier, 1986: 19-39; Popplow, 1998: 116-120; Pinon, Romano, Vérin, 2002: 16-17; Bredekamp, 2002). This positive appreciation of innovation went hand in hand with the ennoblement of the mechanical arts as theoretical knowledge. As cartographic techniques, navigational instruments, mining industries, ballistics, pharmacology and many other crafts flourished, practical knowledge was translated into bookish learning.

A genre of books that celebrated mechanical engineering, that gained a distinct popularity in these years, was the so-called 'machine theatre'. Machine theatres were lavishly illustrated atlases that contained ingenious contraptions invented by their authors. They were published by French and Italian engineers, such as Jean Errard (1554-1610), Jacques Besson (sixteenth century), Agostino Ramelli (1531-1600 ca.), Vittorio Zonca (1568-1602). These books combined spectacular illustrations of inventions with explanations of the mechanics that underlay them – in fact mechanics that were impossible to reproduce in practice (Sawday, 2007: 70-124). The luxury volumes were intended for the entertainment of aristocrats – such as the Roman patricians who went to the Oratory for spiritual guidance (Edgerton, 1991: 148-192; Dolza, Vérin, 2004: 20-22; Popplow, 2004: 23-24). The Italian version of Gallonio's treatise appeared in the middle of the flowering period of Renaissance

machine theatres (Dolza, Vérin, 2004: 8-9). It consciously inverted the glorification of human genius, by amassing examples of complicated inventions that persecutors employed to torture Christians, without ever succeeding in conquering their faith[2].

The martyrs submitted themselves willingly to the perverse contrivances of the pagan persecutors. Gallonio treated these inventions one by one as mechanistic phenomena. The mechanical interest of the priest was a suggestion, however, rather than a proper fascination. The treatise imitated machine theatres, but its message was exactly the opposite from that of self promoting engineers like Ramelli and Besson. Gallonio intended the mechanistic treatment of martyrological motives to invert the fascination exerted by technology. Take the *equuleus*, the 'wooden horse'. This was a beautiful emblem of human ingenuity defeated by the endurance of a martyr lying upon it, looking up to heaven to find the strength to withstand the pain of the mechanism which slowly dislocates the joints of the victim. The machines of violence should emphasize the passivity and faith of the Christian martyrs subjected to them.
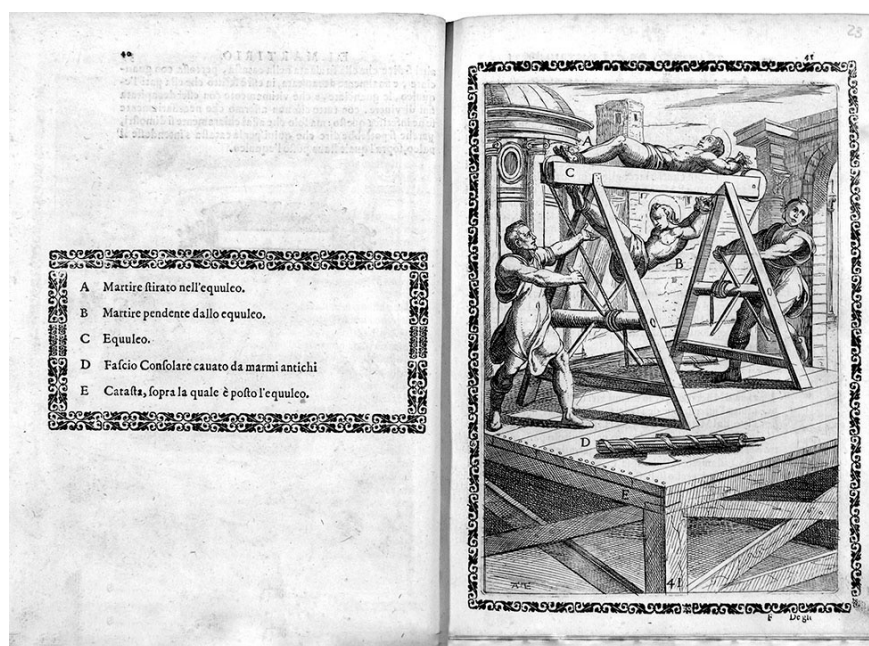

Fig. 1 – Giovanni Guerra and Antonio Tempesta, Equuleus (Gallonio, 1591: 40-41)

ANTIQUARIANISM AND THE JUDICIARY

In the Latin edition Gallonio made alterations that shifted the focus from the instruments of martyrdom to the torture proper. In the expanded scholarly apparatus the priest introduced elements of legal humanism (Kelley, 1970: 53-148; Maclean, 1992: 12-19, 30-34; Gadoffre, 1997: 26-30; Sanchi, 2004). Instead of adding quotations from ancient mechanical literature, such as Pappus or Heron, Gallonio chose to cite modern studies of jurists like Guillaume Budé, Andrea Alciati and Jacques Cujas (Touber, 2009). The new emphasis on the judiciary in the Latin edition, is borne out by the insertion of passages referring to contemporary victims of religious persecution. Gallonio added passages on the torture suffered by sixteenth-century Catholics at the hands of Protestants in Britain, France and the Low Countries (e.g. Gallonio, 1594: 76-77, 140, 176, 207).

Furthermore, in the Latin edition Gallonio invokes the judicial torture of his own society as an aid in understanding the functioning of the ancient torments (cfr. Merback, 1999). When explaining the use of the *trochlea*, the pulley, Gallonio states: «this functioned in the way that 'in these times' murderers use to be hauled up by a cord, with their hands tied behind their backs, in order to wrangle the truth out of them» (Gallonio, 1594: 41-42)[3]. This is a plain description of the *corda* or *strappata*, the most commonly applied torture in the early modern period.

In the Latin edition of the treatise Gallonio thus associated the violence used against Christian martyrs with contemporary instances of judicial violence. It became

[2] For more detailed and substantiated versions of this argument the reader may turn to previous articles of the author (Touber, 2009 [i.e. 2012]; Touber, 2013).

[3] «*eo modo, quo 'temporibus istis' rei mortis, revinctis post terga manibus, extorquendae veritatis causa, fune elevari solent*» *(my translation and emphasis)*.

a clerical counterpart to secular, legal scholarship (McCuaig, 1989: 165-168, 349). The change of title is significant: *Treatise of Instruments of Martyrdom* became *Book of Tortures of Holy Martyrs*. Also significant is the addition of an extensive preface by Pier Paolo Crescenzi, a prelate who made his career in the papal tribunals (Gallonio, 1594: preface; Fosi, 1984). The new edition concentrated on judicial torture: torture which elicited, not the confession of a crime, but the confession of the true religion. It was a statement against the judicial violence perpetrated by Protestant authorities in Northwestern Europe.

In the martyrological work of Gallonio, we thus see two very different strategies of embedding martyrdom in sixteenth-century culture. The initial Italian version developed a strategy *ad captum geniorum*: it captured the attention of ambitious young nobles fascinated by human genius, in order to impose humility and passiveness on them. The Latin edition complied with the scholarly standards of the erudite *historia sacra* of Baronio and Bosio. It engaged more directly with the judicial culture of their own age.

Reception of Gallonio's Mechanistic Imagery

In subsequent centuries, reception of Gallonio's treatise branched off in two directions. The images fascinated subsequent generations – but not only devout Catholics. One route of the reception of Gallonio's martyrological machinery led unexpectedly into the religious experimentation of marginal Protestants of the Dutch Early Enlightenment. Another strand had his work – the Latin version – bogged down in specialist antiquarian studies which concentrated on the factual reconstruction of the ancient culture. In the process Gallonio's treatise to some extent lost its Tridentine function as a spiritual exhortation to be impassive in the face of adversity, leaving only the depictions of inventions on the one hand, and the straightforward inquiry into torture on the other.

To be sure, the images as well as the verbal expositions in Gallonio's treatise served to coordinate the inventions of artists dealing with martyrological torture in sacred art, bound to the demands of Counter-Reformation devotion. The illustrations by Guerra and Tempesta closely followed precepts of decorum in international Tridentine literature discussing propriety in the depiction of martyrdom (Mansour, 2005: 169-171). In Spain Gallonio's work was influential in the production of sacred art in the seventeenth century (De la Peña Velasco, 2012: 148-150). However, the same imagery of torture instruments also satisfied curious minds whose motivation was ingenuity proper, rather than piety.

In 1659 Raphaël Trichet du Fresne republished Gallonio's treatise – the Latin text, with the copper engravings of the Italian edition, which Trichet found more elegant. Trichet was librarian of the Royal Treasurer Nicolas Fouquet and, significantly, an art theorist and bibliophile (Sorensen). In his edition, he meant to arouse admiration rather than devotion. Seventeenth-century French clergy frowned upon the religious propriety of exuberant Italian Counter-Reformation devotional art. The stark contrast between martyrdom and self-advancement as depicted in Gallonio's treatise, did not resonate with the devotional sensitivity of France under Mazarin (Phillips, 1997: 47-51; Treffers, 2003: 60; Gimaret, 2011: 195-201). Accordingly, Trichet's interest was not so much in spirituality as it was in graphic composition. He must have recognized the extraordinary emphasis on mechanical inventions. In the preface, Trichet calls attention to the ingenuity of ancient pagans in inventing torments:

> The history of the first Christians is almost totally tragic, and violence has been committed to such an extent, that Antiquity has hardly been more ingenious in any other business. (Gallonio, 1659-1660: preface)[4]

Trichet points out that the pictures were designed by Guerra, «whose brother», he adds, «was an expert in architecture, and led the construction» of the Chiesa Nuova, the Oratorian church (Gallonio, 1659-1660: preface)[5]. This was again an indication of Trichet du Fresne's orientation on technical know-how. Accordingly,

[4] *«Tragica pene tota est primorum Christianorum historia, tantisque modis in eos saevitium est, ut vix in alia re ingeniosior fuerit antiquitas».*

[5] *«Ioanni Guerrae frater erat Ioannes Baptista Guerra, qui cùm esset architecturae peritissimus, praefuit constructioni templi S. Mariae in Vallicella, quod in Urbe Ecclesiam Novam nuncupant, pertinetque ad Congregationis Oratorii presbyteros, inter quos Gallonius religiosam vitam ducebat».*

the only thing that Trichet du Fresne altered in the text, was to omit the introductory preface by the cleric-lawyer Pierpaolo Crescenzi. The Parisian edition thus shifted the Latin version from the legal-antiquarian sphere to the sphere of mechanics and design. The machines ceased to serve as a foil for the endurance of Christian martyrs. They became self-serving, as graphical representations of engineering in a sacred context.

The graphic appeal of the images of machines of torture is corroborated by subsequent adaptations. First, in 1669, the Amsterdam-based printer of Catholic works, Andreas Frisius (Mirto, 1987), produced another edition – with a phoney title page, locating the publishing house in Antwerp (Gallonio, 1668). The illustrations were based on the Trichet du Fresne edition – they are essentially the same, with two differences. They were in mirror image, suggesting that the engraver of the Frisius edition indeed took a printed copy of the Parisian edition as a model for his plates. More significantly, the scenes of torture were detached from the classicizing architectural background. The torments, executed by ingenious machines, were isolated from their historicizing context. They became free floating objects.

It was a Dutch Protestant, Willem Goeree, who subsequently pillaged the Frisius-edition for its illustrations, in a work of ecclesiastical antiquities. He had the single scenes of torture gathered in one impressive panorama of martyrdom. He inserted this fold-out of the torments of early Christians in a massive history of the Apostolic Church (Goeree, 1691: I, 826-827). The Protestant Goeree had no interest in stimulating veneration of martyrs. His two-volume book, *Prolegomena to Biblical Wisdom*, which he wrote in the vernacular, served to give his lay public the proper background to the historical reality of sacred history so as to be able to judge biblical texts on their own merit.

Goeree was in fact a peculiar Protestant. He was a controversial figure, whose publications made him suspect in the eyes of orthodox Calvinists. He was not a professional theologian, but earned his living publishing books – even if he was a very erudite autodidact in *historia sacra*, being the son of a medical doctor who had written extensively on biblical history (Haitsma Mulier and Van der Lem, 1990: 152-153). His many publications on sacred history catered to a variegated religious current within the seventeenth-century Republic that sought spiritual advancement outside the official churches, through self-education and egalitarian lay gatherings. Modern historiography tends to associate these confessional fringe groups with the critique of religion that found full expression in the Radical Enlightenment (Kołakowski, 1969: 166-177; Fix, 1991; Israel, 2001: 447-456; Leemans, 2004). With Goeree, the machines of Gallonio's treatise ended up in the hands of a religious maverick.

Fig. 2 – Jan Luyken (attr.), The Torture of Blood-witnesses (Goeree, 1691: I, 826-827)

Gallonio's martyrological machinery must have held particular fascination for Goeree. Besides ecclesiastical history, Goeree wrote on the theory of drawing and

architectural design. Around 1700, he became embroiled in a debate over the interpretation of the Bible, revolving around the reconstruction of the Temple of Solomon. In the aforementioned *Prolegomena to Biblical Wisdom* he brought all his architectural know-how to bear on the notoriously complicated vision of the Temple of the prophet Ezechiel (chapters 40-44) (Goeree, 1691: II, 1429-1716). In the ensuing debate, his main opponent, Johannes Henricus Cocceius Jr. took him to task for drawing on architectural instead of philological expertise in biblical interpretation (Cocceius Jr., 1691-1692: 653-656). Leaving aside the details of this conflict, the point is that for the confessionally eccentric Goeree it was natural to revel in mechanisms in the context of sacred history, such as Gallonio's images of machines of torture.

This is one of the two directions in which reception of Gallonio's work branched off: in the hands of Raphael Trichet du Fresne, Andreas Frisius and then Willem Goeree, Gallonio's ingenious machines of torture became a graphical curiosity which appealed to their taste for the history of art, architecture and constructional design. The other direction, which hinged on the scholarship of the Latin edition, equally divested it of both its spiritual and polemical efficacy.

Reception of Gallonio's Scholarly Text

The Latin edition of Gallonio's martyrological treatise turned up repeatedly as a source of expert knowledge of Roman torture, in antiquarian scholarship intent on a plain reconstruction of ancient culture, from the second half of the seventeenth onward (Touber, 2009 [i.e. 2012]). Ottavio Ferrari (1607-1682) of Padoa University, for example, devoted an essay to the *equuleus* in 1679. Among the scholars that he cited, we find our priest Gallonio, besides the legal historian Carlo Sigonio, and the military engineer Girolamo Maggi. Ferrari disagreed highly with Gallonio's reconstruction – not because of his awkward spiritual message –, but because he had misread the classical sources (Ferrari, 1679: 14-19). In the work of Ferrari the devotional charge of the *equuleus* is hard to discern. The term *equuleus* figured among antiquarian observations that covered predominantly Roman military history: the ship which collapsed in open sea, with which Nero intended to kill Agrippina; the *labarum* as an army standard in common use in late antique Roman armies; the insignia of cohorts. There is little in Ferrari that induces to veneration of martyrs, nor any exhortation against Protestant heretics.

The practical appeal of Gallonio's erudite work, devoid of confessional militancy, is corroborated by the dissemination and consultation of the work among Protestant scholars. There is no hint of enmity in Caspar Sagittarius (Schutze), a Lutheran scholar from Luneburg who published a book on early Christian martyrs in 1673, with a title which is reminiscent of Gallonio's Latin treatise: *A Book on the Tortures of Martyrs in the Early Church* (Sagittarius, 1673)[6]. The structure of his book is also similar to Gallonio's book, with chapters discussing one category of torture each. The rationale in the sequence of chapters was the progressive destruction and humiliation of martyrs's bodies: from captivity, banishment, forced labour and wipping, the books runs via death by sword, by cross, by animals and by fire, to death by drowning, by precipitation, by lapidation and by miscellaneous torments, to end with a chapter on the public display of dead bodies (Cfr. Lazzerini, 1994; Sawday, 1995: 3-4; Egmond, 2003). Sagittarius cited Catholic and Protestant scholars indiscriminately, drawing on distinctively partisan Tridentine authors such as Baronio, Bellarmino and Jacob Gretser, as much as on Protestant luminaries such as John Selden and Gerardus Johannes Vossius, and his fellow-Lutheran Wilhelm Shickard. Sagittarius quoted Gallonio to substantiate his claim that certain *rotae* mentioned in martyrs's acts referred to large wheels, which pagans used to tie up Christians, and then roll them downhill (Sagittarius, 1673: 332). If Sagittarius meant to instill respect for early Christian martyrs in Lutheran fashion, this did not withhold him from making ample use of Catholic martyrological literature, including Gallonio's reconstructions of torture (Cfr. Burschel, 2004, pp. 13-82; Cavallotto, 2009).

Other Protestant authors also occasionally appealed to Gallonio's martyrological work in passing for their antiquarian and philological studies, as a source of

[6] Stefan Fisch considered Sagittarius to be a representative of a generation of Lutheran scholars who 'de-theologized' ('ent-theologisiert') history (Fisch, 1997: 121).

factualities, without apparent reflection on the initial polemical and spiritual intentions of the Oratorian's work (e.g. Dilherr, 1652: 98; Wolfius, 1732: 357). The epitome of the dispassionate harvesting of scholarship in the service of the advancement of knowledge in the early modern period surely was the *Philosophical Transactions*, the journal of the English Royal Society (Fontes da Costa, 2009). Gallonio figured in this journal in 1730, in an article on the *equuleus* published by John Ward, Gresham Professor of Rhetoric. A friend of Ward sent him a drawing of a marble relief in Palazzo Borghese in Rome. This led him to conduct a review of previous scholarship on the *equuleus*. He distinguished two incompatible opinions, one that endorsed Gallonio's reconstruction of a horizontal beam set on four legs, the other that went along with Ferrari's concept of a vertical pole. Significantly, Ward concluded that neither was wrong. They just referred to different phases in Roman history (Ward, 1729-1730). The Latin term that denoted a gruesome instrument of torture conveyed a reality which evolved in the course of Roman history. Ward attempted to disentangle the diachronic stratification of antiquated terms, revealing the layers of historical lexicology. In this endeavour Gallonio's work lost its martyrological relevance and became a mere scholarly reflection on one of the piled up strata of ancient culture (Cfr. Hanson, 2009: 126-193).

It was in this period that Prospero Lambertini, the pre-eminent canonist of the eighteenth century – later pope Benedict XIV – quoted Gallonio's treatise in his systemization of canonization law. Lambertini had a chapter on the legal requirements for the veneration of martyrs. He argued that a Christian who died in forced labour, rather than being murdered straight away, was entitled to veneration by the Church. The Cardinal cited Gallonio for precedents, to substantiate his argument (Lambertini, 1734-1738: III, 123). For Lambertini the Latin text of Gallonio's treatise was highly relevant for devotion to the martyrs. But it was not as an edifying allegory, the mechanistic emblems of the Italian edition, nor as a polemical statement against heretical secular justice, the original intention of the Latin edition, but as plain antiquarian scholarship serving to reconstruct ancient judicial violence that Lambertini drew on Gallonio's work. His treatise became valued as straightforward expert scholarship in Roman torture.

Scepticism and martyrology

It must have been in his new capacity as an authority in ancient torture that Gallonio must have occurred as an anachronism to participants in the Early Enlightenment, who were critical both of the historical claims underlying the authority of the Christian Churches, and of the moral efficacy of judicial and religious cruelty. The response of the new critics was exemplified by Pierre Bayle, the Huguenot living in exile in Rotterdam (Israel, 2001: 331-341; Israel, 2006: 145-154), who took note of Gallonio's martyrological treatise. Bayle devoted a short article to the Oratorian in the *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*. He called attention to Gallonio's *Treatise on the torture of martyrs*, judging it «*fort curieux*», very curious (Bayle, 1697: I.2 (*C-G*), 1215-1216)[7]. His inclusion of Gallonio in the *Dictionnaire* was hardly a mark of the esteem in which he held the Oratorian scholar.

In the course of the seventeenth century the martyrological tradition of the Catholic Church took some severe blows. Most fundamentally, the historical veracity of the acts of martyrs became a liability with the general corrosion of the certitude of historical knowledge under the ongoing attacks of sceptics (Momigliano 1950: 295-307; Borghero, 1983: 248; Popkin 2003). Historical veracity had been a *sine qua non* for Tridentine martyrology, as testified by the progressive buttressing of cults of martyrs with historical documentation since the sixteenth century (Ditchfield, 1995: 17-67; Guazzelli, 2005: 76-89; Guazzelli, 2012b: 95-105). Since historical pyrrhonists doubted the value of texts as reliable witnesses to historical fact in principle, this development undermined the most basic proof of the validity of the cults of martyrs: the acts that reported the details of their lives and martyrdom. In response, Catholic clergy developed more sophisticated instruments of historical criticism, with the works by Jean Mabillon and Thierry Ruinart being among the most famous of late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century *historia sacra*, building upon the

[7] «*Gallonius (Antoine) Prêtre de l'Oratoire à Rome, a composé entre autres Ouvrages un Traité* de martyrum cruciatibus*, qui est fort curieux. On y voit la figure des instruments dont les Payens se servoient contre les Martyrs de la primitive Eglise*».

groundwork laid a century before by Baronio and his local imitators. Conversely, apologetical intent at the same time generated exuberant expressions of devotion which included 'material proof' of martyrdom such as the blood of martyrs in vials retrieved from the catacombs, tenaciously defended against scepticism by chemical experiments (Gotor, 2004: 121-124; Ditchfield, 2005: 317-323; Ghilardi, 2008: 46-54; Ghilardi, 2012; cfr. De Ceglia, 2012). Between the refined criticism of historical documents as exemplified by the Maurists, and the jubilant retrieval of haematic relics, Gallonio's study of torture methods, outdated in its documentary base and half-hearted in its appeal to tangible objects, had little chance of continuing to enjoy general consent.

The historical validation of the martyrological tradition also became entangled with the issue of religious toleration, which continued to provoke debates among clergy and philosophers throughout the seventeenth century, as religiously inspired or motivated violence kept flaring up, either in open warfare (the Thirty Year's War, the English Civil War) or in repressive action by governments, Protestant as well as Catholic (in England repressive measures between 1664 and 1681, in France the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes of 1685) (Spurr, 1991: 47-61; Mandelbrote, 2001; Marshall, 2006: 15-194; Kaplan 2007: 333-358; Simonutti, 2012)[8].

One specific direction in which the proliferating discussion on religious toleration branched out, was the intensity of religious persecution that early Christians had suffered at the hands of pagan emperors. Notably, the Anglican scholar Henry Dodwell argued in one of his dissertations which accompanied the edition of Cyprian by John Fell of 1682, that the persecutions of the emperors before Diocletian had been much less numerous and less violent than martyrological tradition would suggest. Dodwell intended his argument as a plea for non-resistance by Anglican bishops in the face of the impending ascension to the English throne of the Catholic James II, but it provoked an elaborate rebuttal by the Benedictine Thierry Ruinart who could not permit this trivialization of the violence endured by the venerated martyrs (Dodwell, 1682: 57-90; Ruinart, 1689: I-LXXIV; Quantin, 2006: 313-316). Dodwell, however, had found corroboration of his revisionist history of early Christian martyrdom in a newly discovered patristic text, *De martyrum persecutoribus* by Lactantius, found in France in 1678 and soon available in various editions all over Europe. The disconcerting redimensioning of the intensity of the persecutions of early Christian martyrs was thus hard to dismiss as a mere fabrication by an Anglican polemicist (Rougé, 1978; Christensen, 1980: 10). In this way scholarly engagement with early Christianity, inspired by the need to resolve tensions among rival confessions, made the graphic celebration of martyrological torments such as those of Gallonio's treatise seem excessive.

Another, concurrent development must have weighed upon the specific case of Gallonio, in view of the centrality of torture to his martyrological work. Philosophical reflection on torture started to describe the juridical practice as a misguided harassment of the victim's sense perception, instead of a forceful method of eliciting truth. The first theoretical critiques of torture as a legal practice appeared, by Augustin Nicolas and Jacques Tourreil in the final decades of the seventeenth century, who already deployed arguments that would recur in the eighteenth century in the more wideranging works of Cesare Beccaria and Pietro Verri. This criticism initially was not based in ethical but in epistemological considerations. Central to their criticism was that torture did not elicit truth. On the contrary, so it seemed to the early critics, torture impeded the truth. Pain did not force the truth out of the victim; rather it filled the mind of the victim, forcing him to say anything that would effect relief. It made victims respond to questions with random answers, rather than in a deliberate manner (Silverman, 2001: 159-167). In this way, pain transformed from a litmus test of veracity, into an animal feeling.

Critics thus disjoined pain from truthfulness. Pain inflicted on criminals, as well as pain inflicted on religious dissenters, became marks of an irrational social order. In fact, in one of the first *causes célèbres* which provoked widespread condemnation of judicial torture in eighteenth-century France, the arrest and torture of members of the Protestant Calas family, Voltaire contributed to the flurry of excitement with an essay in which the *philosophe* argued for religious toleration (Silverman, 2001: 158). Judicial torture and religious violence, especially state organized religious suppression, became conflated in the minds of critics.

[8] Debates on religious toleration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have been the subject of intense historical study the past twenty years or so, and the publications cited here constitute a mere sample of the literature available.

Historically untenable, socially inadvisable and epistemologically unsound: giving testimony to the Christian faith by unflinchingly enduring the horrors of torture did not universally appeal anymore as the solid cornerstone of Catholic devotion. To Enlightenment thinkers, including Bayle, appalled by the cruelty that the Church of Rome seemed to exalt, the legalistic antiquarianism which appropriated Gallonio's scholarship must have appeared as a perversion of intellectual energies. As a matter of fact, Bayle's article devoted to Gallonio must be seen in the context of his oblique critique on Counter-Reformation Catholicism. Bayle did not honour the more famous champions of Catholic erudition, Baronio or Bosio, with full articles in his *Dictionnaire*. With regard to the former, as Bernard Dompnier has skilfully shown, the references are veiled. It required an attentive and shrewd reader to see how Bayle repeatedly criticized the Oratorian cardinal, as for instance in an article on the much less commanding figure of Abram Bzovski, the Polish Dominican and continuator of Baronio, on whose historical work Bayle passed denigrating judgment – after reporting an outrageous amourous anecdote (Bayle, 1697: I.1 (*A-B*), 711-712; Dompnier, 2012: 375-378). If Bayle chose to devote an article to Gallonio, this was because the Oratorian best exemplified a rhetorical culture which by 1700 seemed bizarre. For Bayle, Gallonio's work had become, indeed, «*fort curieux*».

Conclusion

Gallonio's treatise floated around in early modern culture – and continues to do so up till the present. It makes its appearance, for instance, in Piero Meldini's *L'avvocata delle vertigini*, a one-of-a-kind novel that merits the label of 'hagiographical thriller'. In this work of fiction a certain Monsignor Berlinghieri proudly shows his recently acquired copy of Gallonio's *Treatise of the Instruments of Martyrdom*:

> "Gallonio!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "The edition of '91, to be precise. And with all 46 engravings". (Meldini, 1994: 14)[9]

The storyline is about a scholar who devotes his life to the philological study of saints's lives. In the end he gets absorbed, quite literally, by the history of one female saint whose history is particularly enigmatic. What matters here is that Gallonio appears on the first pages, so as to create a disturbing effect. Meldini mentions the treatise of instruments of martyrdom, drawing attention to the martyrs «hung, stretched, compressed, beaten, whipped, crucified, scratched, flayed, […] fried in grill pans, roasted on the spit», meant to convey a chilling atmosphere.

This sensation was absent from Gallonio's original intention. The literary effect has become possible because of a transformation that occurred between 1650 and 1750. Meldini's enumeration of the various methods of inflicting pain signals to the modern mind an anomaly in Christian devotion. It suggests the impassive and instrumental contemplation of the violation of the animal instinct of harmless victims. The modern response of revulsion echoes the distaste expressed, for instance, in a discussion of sacred art by Denis Diderot – who had been inspired in his rejecton of what he perceived as the fanaticism inherent in Christian religion by Bayle (Israel, 2006: 787):

> If our paintings could be other than scenes of atrocities, a flayed man here, a hanged man there, here someone roasted, there someone grilled, a disgusting butchery. (Diderot, 1967: 122-123)[10]

Gallonio's treatise of instruments of martyrdom, however, initially had nothing to do with the sensuality inherent in both the Enlightened revulsion at the veneration of martyrs and the Romantic pleasure of shivering over a thriller. Gallonio's *Treatise of the Instruments of Martyrdom* expressed a late sixteenth-century tension between the creative ingenuity of mankind, and passive submission to God. It extolled the victory of Christian submissiveness over human ambition.

This initial programme was torn apart in subsequent centuries. Gallonio's mechanistic imagery ended up in the hands of artisans and art theorists. His antiquarian

[9] «"Il Gallonio!" esclamò trionfante. "L'edizione del '91, nientedimeno. E con tutte le quarantasei tavole del Tempesta"».

[10] «si cet abominable christianisme ne s'était pas établi par le meurtre et par le sang; […] si nos tableaux pouvaient être autre chose que des scènes d'atrocité, un écorché, un pendu, un rôti, un grillé, une dégoûtante boucherie».

scholarship fed into the juridical and historical fortification of the edifice of the Church. Gallonio's martyrological machine theatre became a sterile reconstruction of juridical torture. The reception of the treatise did turn it into a bleak collection of atrocities – the kind of sensual perversity that Diderot found despicable in Christianity.

This would seem representative of a broader development. The ecclesiological significance of martyrological torture changed. Martyrdom as an emblematic inversion of secular culture became less amenable to a society which required citizens to be obedient to Church and State. Torture, central to martyrdom, lost its metaphorical quality as a test of faith (Phillips, 1997: 47-51; Gimaret, 2011: 77-118). Ecclesiastical erudition increasingly focused on historical verification, instead. Gallonio's imagery of torture machines could now and then excite the imaginations of collectors interested in graphic invention, and his antiquarian scholarship might occasionally come in useful for the reconstruction of some details of the culture of early Christianity. But as a unified devotional or polemical project, Gallonio's martyrology lost out to new requirements, epistemological, moral and aesthetic.

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