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European University Institute
Department of History and Civilisation

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Elisa Sampson Vera Tudela

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining
the degree of Doctor of the European University Institute

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For A´gi.

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Acknowledgments

As befits a study of the relationship between the Old World and the New, this thesis owes its existence to both worlds. In particular to Italy, where at the European University Institute I wrote most of the text and to Mexico, where I found the inspiration to do so. Among the many people in both worlds to whom I owe substantial debts of gratitude, I will mention only a few: in Europe, Olwen Hufton, who opened my eyes to history, Anthony Pagden, who showed me what was Old but could truly be transmuted into the New, Jonathan Murphy, Luisa Passerini, Ana María V. T. Sampson, Peter Snowdon and Juan Pablo Zúñiga, who all read or commented on different parts of the text. In the Americas, Asunción Lavrin read the vaguest of first outlines and encouraged and advised, Lourdes Villafuerte García and José Antonio Robles Cahero introduced me to the Mexican group *Historia de las Mentalidades* and, more importantly, welcomed me into their circle of friends. I especially want to thank Roberto Beristain of the *Biblioteca Nacional* in Mexico City, whose knowledge and love of the library, combined with an extraordinary generosity of spirit, led him to guide me with unfailing intuition towards the material I wanted and liked.

Introduction

> *En esta ciudad de México, cabeza de este mundo Indiano, emporio de virtud, letras y nobleza, imán de todas las naciones y encanto de los extranjeros. Aquí pues, nació esta niña el día diez y nueve de enero, año de mil setecientos y nueve, porque quiso Dios a las grandezas con que su Providencia ha ilustrado a esta ciudad, añadirle ésta de tanta monta, y hacerla cuna o concha feliz de tanta perla, jardín de tan bella rosa.*[1]

Sebastiana Josepha de la SS. Trinidad, a professed nun in the convent of San Juan de la Penitencia whose hagiography was published in 1765, was born on 19 January 1709 in the city of Mexico. For her mother and father, Doña Ana María Marin Samaniego and Don Francisco Maya, this was certainly a happy event, but probably neither parent could have imagined their daughter's birth would be described by her hagiographer, Joseph Eugenio Valdés, as the most magnificent of the splendours with which God, in His mercy, had seen fit to grace the city. In Valdés's account of Sebastiana's life, the saintliness of this *criollo* nun is portrayed as being of enormous symbolic worth, the jewel that sets off the value of the viceregal capital. She is the seal confirming Mexico City's civility, a quality implicit in its description as an agora of virtue, letters and nobility, as a magnet for all nations and a delight for all strangers.

The great symbolic worth attributed to the saintly nun in the New World was not, however, so far from the minds of the Spanish women who undertook the perilous journey to the Indies in order to found the first convents and who likened their voyages to the dangers martyrs encountered.[2] The recreation of the cloister by these nuns, in the desert which was the New World, can also be interpreted as a supreme instance of the exportation of civility to barbarian lands. In this thesis I examine the various representations produced by both men and women of these nuns' lives and of their

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[1] [In this city of Mexico, the head of this world of the Indies, agora of virtue, letters and nobility, magnet of all nations and enchantress of all strangers. Here, this girl child was born on the nineteenth of January, 1709 because God, who through his Providence has decorated this city with splendours, wanted to add this priceless one, and make it the cradle or fortunate oyster of such a pearl, the garden for such a beauteous rose] Joseph Eugenio Valdés, *Vida Admirable y Penitente de la Venerable Madre Sor Sebastiana Josepha de la SS. Trinidad* (México: Biblioteca Mexicana, 1765)3-4. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. I have modernised the punctuation and spelling as well as resolving all abbreviations which are not titles for ease of reading.

[2] Cf. Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth Century Lives* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995)78 on the voyage to Canada in 1639 of Marie de l'Incarnation, foundress of the first Ursuline convent in North America, as a fulfilment of her desire for martyrdom; "Martyrdom was not a passive affair, a mere acceptance of meritorious suffering and death [...] Martyrdom was a prize one sought, a mobilizer for audacious action, a priming of that flesh already disciplined by nettles, an enflaming of the heart - the seat of bravery - already fuelled by union with the heart of Christ.".

convents. I confine my study to Mexico City, the capital of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, and in the main to seven convents of different religious orders, some very early Mendicant foundations, and others of orders which arrived much later on the colonial scene.[3] I aim to show that in the context of Spain's evangelical empire-building mission, these writings provide a unique opportunity to assess the role and significance of women in the colonial project.

The individuals and institutions transplanted from Europe to America in the colonising enterprise arrived in a space conceived of as being without history - the *New* Spain. This *tabula rasa* afforded the first generation of colonisers undreamt of opportunities for wealth, fame, and social mobility. It also implied the erasure of any inconvenient indigenous history which might contradict or complicate the colonial venture. One of the first recorded actions of the Spaniards was the burning of indigenous codices, since these were believed to contain not only the 'rites of the devil', but also the histories and genealogies of the vanquished peoples. Although an oversimplification, the colonial enterprise can indeed be characterised as finely poised between these two drives of creation and destruction. Inevitably, this balancing trick grew more and more complicated as time passed and the boundaries between Spaniard and Indian became increasingly blurred. The continual need to steady these relations influenced the participation of both the transplanted individual and the transplanted institution in the many narratives which constituted New Spanish culture. The founding of the female enclosed orders in Mexico took place some time after the initial colonising and evangelising drive (the first convent, La Concepción, dates from 1540), and was thus the heir to a conjuncture of multiple cultural forces. The way this is represented in the writings connected to these institutions and to their inhabitants sheds light on the fortunes of dominant Spanish norms in New Spain.

Writing in and about the convent is crucial to the cultural analysis of New Spain I want to pursue not only because it constitutes a form of self-representation but, as Giulia Calvi points out in relation to writing from the cloister in general, because it is only the 'tip of an iceberg' made up of relations between the author and her or his subject which are *historically* determined.[4] Writing in this sense comes to signify a

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[3] Jesús María, 1578 (Conceptionist), San José, 1616 (Carmelite), Sta. Catarina de Sena, 1580 (Dominican), Nra. Sra. de las Nieves, 1743 (Brigidine), La Enseñanza, 1755 (Compañía de María), San Felipe Jesús, 1673 (Capuchin), Sta. Clara, 1670 (Poor Clares) and Corpus Christi, 1728 (Franciscan).

[4] Giulia Calvi Ed., *Barroco al femminile* (Roma: Laterza,1992)viii.

locus of social activity. I want to stress that in the thesis I understand 'context' not so much as a back-drop to these texts but as a means of locating the writing nuns and the exact conventions of their social and intellectual universe precisely, and so of defining these texts as part of a tradition that was not Spanish but New Spanish, not male, but female.

I wish to examine the ecclesiastical-religious axis on which one specific culture turned. In part this means an examination of the spirituality of the culture. What I observed, however, were not so much lives informed by spirituality as a spirituality constructed through living actions. The quotidian is the both the vehicle and the tool of this spirituality.[5] Behaviour characterised as spiritual in this period, as so many facets of the Baroque, has had a host of varied and contradictory labels applied to it. Assertions of its extravagance are refuted with evidence of the profound coherence of its popular theology; its 'artifice' belied by the dogmatic and visceral strength of its faith, its hunger for prodigies and harvesting of superstitions, some accredited with Papal bulls, finding a counterpoint in rigour and ascesis.[6] All these contradictions and amalgams, confusions and syntheses, mean that as an object of study, Baroque spirituality constitutes a model of culture in the broad sense of the word, rather than only denoting a set of specific activities regulating the relation of human beings to their God.

I approach this history of female spirituality in the New World through a variety of writings. For example, the material connected to the Inquisition which I examine is a mixture of personal deposition and transcriptions of oral evidence given by witnesses during a trial. In many cases the quality of the source is inversely proportional to the quality of the writing (where excellence is understood to lie in the originality and individuality of the masterpiece), its historiographic value increasing the more the writing becomes a frame for repetitive ideas, commonplaces and *topoi*. Clearly, repetition, individuality and originality in this period were conceived of in a manner very

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[5] Cf. Olwen Hufton on the need for any history of the spirituality of this period to consider the role of women and of the feminine: "With the Reformation and Counter Reformation, the writing of history extends to a consideration of the responses of the masses [...] Not surprisingly, since women constituted half of any congregation and religion was a part of the warp and the woof of their everyday lives and the system of values to which they subscribed, it is possible to discern a distinctive female presence in and response to many of the changes." In *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe. Vol. 1. 1500 - 1899* (London: Harper Collins, 1995)365.

[6] Cf. León Carlos Alvarez Santaló's prologue to José L. Sánchez Lora, *Mujeres, conventos y formas de la religiosidad Barroca* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1988).

different to the Romantic tradition of literary value.[7] Part of my aim is to recontextualise these writings, restoring their profound creativity to them by understanding the rhetorical tradition which formed them. These repeated *topoi* interest me most both because of their expression of collective beliefs, their betokening a desire to impose certain ideas, and because this pattern was often broken or took on a different form in New World versions.[8] This exercise of contextualisation places my study at the centre of discussions about the originality of Baroque artistic production and I argue that by understanding the 'marginal' Baroque art of the Americas as having been formed by a number of specific historically determined factors, my work casts the period's preoccupation with issues of novelty into a clearer light.

The writing of virtue and sin, of rebellion and of conformity in this period, is conceived of as the manifestation of a received (in the sense of learned and diffused) ideal. Hence the period's predilection for 'mirror' books; mirrors of princes, of noblemen, of young women, of married women, of widows and, of course, of saints who constituted mirrors in which everyone could see the Godhead reflected. This didactic impulse, while certainly considered a corrective tool over minds, is also credited with forging and fashioning new collective opinions and identities. Thus, the writing I examine is not didactic in a monolithic way, it does not only show the 'ought' of behaviour, making it solely the theorisation of practices for which there can be no evidence. Didacticism in this period always begins with a form of seduction consisting of the alluring exposition of 'what is', in order to guide the pupil, by means of dramatisation and exemplification, towards new and alternative values. I argue that what 'was' in New Spain was radically different to what 'had been' in the Peninsula and that the didactic model and its written form registered such difference.

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[7] In this instance, the classical traditions of simplicity, transparency and even a certain degree of clumsiness as betokening an unmediated relation with the 'real' joined with the mistrust of rhetoric (the archetypal example of its capacity to deceive embodied in St. Augustine's renunciation of his profession as teacher of rhetoric) and with the universal conception of women as 'empty vessels' to mean that excellence in writing was conceived precisely as that which obeyed the norm and was decorous.

[8] Cf. Gabriella Zarri, *Le sante vive: profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1990)12 on the strength of the hagiographic model and its ability to register historical change. For an advocation of the value of an interdisciplinary approach to these texts, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). Greenblatt makes the distinction between texts where the imagination is 'at work' and those where it is 'at play' and claims that the European encounter with the New World brought the imaginative operations usually below the surface of non-literary texts into the light. "Consequently", he argues, "it may be possible to use some of the concerns of literary criticism to illuminate texts written with anything but literary ambitions ..." (23).

Although the study of women's writing and the history of convent life is well advanced in Europe, in Latin America it is still a relatively unexplored field.[9] In the thesis, I deal with a varied, little-known, and almost wholly unconsidered body of writing. Most attempts to understand this kind of writing have been limited to an analysis of the text, or texts, or they have confined themselves to the historical conditions of their production. In this thesis I seek to combine these two approaches. By so doing I hope to go beyond the description and narration which traditionally accompany the discovery of documents written by or concerning women, and to raise at least some of the questions posed by these texts. What, for instance, were the conditions governing a woman's transformation into a writer? Did the means exist to reconcile the identity of a woman as a writer with her sexual identity? Did issues of sexuality and gender inform the creation of literary genres themselves?

Access to women's texts of this period is usually complicated and often tangential. It frequently involves the examination of works by male authors who use primary material written by women. Thus, an important part of my work involves an attempt to understand the cultural context, the imperatives and sanctions, in which the re-elaboration and use by men of texts written by women took place. In terms of scholarly interpretations of the cultural activities of the period, a clear consequence of this re-elaboration of women's texts is that the issue of gender has often been elided or ignored by these readings, which effectively reproduce the exclusion of women practised by the canonical literature of the period. While my own work does not directly address the issue of canon formation, it is concerned, as the analysis of previously forgotten writings demonstrates, with the move away from a study of the canonical text towards a focus on writing as a symbolic cultural form.

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[9] For a review of the historiography of New World women see Asunción Lavrin, 'Women in Spanish American Colonial Society' in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Leslie Bethell Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) vol.2: 321-355 and by the same author *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978). Cf. María Lourdes Aguilar Salas, 'Imagen de las Indias en cartas escritas por mujeres en el siglo XVI' in *La voz del silencio: fuentes directas para la historia de las mujeres, siglos VIII - XVIII*, Cristina Segura Graiño Ed. (Madrid: Asociación Cultural Almudayna, 1992)157-171 for an attempt to locate possible sources of writings by women in the Americas who were not nuns and Josephina Muriel, *Cultura femenina Novohispana* (México: UNAM, 1982). Muriel's *Conventos de monjas en la Nueva España* (México: UNAM, 1946) gathers together many previously unknown writings by women. Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlau's selection and analysis of texts by nuns, *Untold Sisters: Hispanic Nuns in their Own Works* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), remains the most significant recent contribution to the field.

The writings I examine were absolutely necessary to the being of their authors as nuns, it defines them; it is their 'work'. By this I mean that the existence of the nuns is justified by their representation, their writing of themselves as virtuous individuals, even as potential saints. Their ability to represent themselves is both a source of vulnerability (because it was always monitored by the authorities) and of strength (because it was impossible to control completely). Although I deal with literature which is in many senses similar to propaganda, its techniques are never straightforward or univocal. I may not have uncovered the literary sisters of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, but in this context it is of little significance that these nuns appear less interesting or less talented than Sor Juana; their importance lies rather in the fact that they write in another ambience where exemplarity is more important than aesthetic virtuosity.[10] By this I do not mean to imply that they are conformist. Their exemplarity is in fact better thought of as a negotiated originality; negotiated with priests, with literary traditions, with cultural values. What it shows is a novel literary form which, though not necessarily outstanding according to aesthetic norms, is nonetheless dynamically creative.

There are competing versions of what exactly constituted New Spanish culture in the period, the one viewing Mexico in opposition to the Peninsula, the other characterising the colony as subservient to Madrid. These interpretations go from political appraisals of Viceregal government, seeing it either as an instance of independent municipal traditions inspired in the medieval *fueros* of Castille, or as a typical example of the encroachment of royal absolutism, to economic analyses which propose radically divergent opinions of the extent to which the colonies were implicated in the 'decline' of Spain, to more broadly cultural judgements. In these cultural evaluations, academic culture, artistic production, and civil society in general in New Spain are alternately praised for their perfect execution of European models or condemned for their provincialism. In the thesis I contend that both these extreme explanations are inadequate. In fact, the material I examine suggests some very complex ways of thinking about and overturning, more than once, the simple

[10] Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-95) called by contemporaries 'the tenth Muse', poet, playwright and leading intellectual figure, first entered the noviciate of the Carmelite convent of San José. She withdrew, however, and eventually professed in the convent of San Jerónimo. See Asunción Lavrin, 'Unlike Sor Juana? The Model Nun in the Religious Literature of Colonial Mexico' in *Feminist Perspectives on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, Stephanie Merrim Ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991)61-85 for a discussion of Sor Juana's 'originality' in relation to the didactic models of the period. For an attempt to trace Sor Juana's literary sisters in Colonial America, see Luis Monguió, 'Compañía para Sor Juana: mujeres cultas en el Virreinato del Perú' in *University of Dayton Review* 16, no. 2 (1983): 45-92.

oppositions between colony and capital, centre and periphery, New and Old, as well as the distinctions, hardly ever discussed in this context, between male and female and enclosed and free.

The diversity and range of material I work with in the thesis reflects a belief that the study of the full complexity of women's experience in the past, as well as a feminist reassessment of it, requires both an interdisciplinary perspective and the use of intellectual approaches which are perhaps more often considered as being mutually exclusive. I hope that gathering these together will produce a densely textured and persuasive account which in its concreteness and intimacy will provide a more nuanced understanding of New Spanish women and the cultures in which they lived.

The New World in this period is less El Dorado or Utopia than the land of Cockaigne - a land, that is, of change and exchange. Take, for instance, the two most often quoted examples of the exchange involved in colonisation; the building of Mexico Cathedral on the site of the most important Aztec temple in the city, and the adoption by the Spaniards of the Indian maize *tortilla* as a replacement for the wheaten bread of the Peninsula. The stark disparity between the two examples means they could easily be thought not so much as evidence of exchange but of brutal imposition on the one hand and pragmatic appropriation on the other. Without in any sense negating the trauma of the conquest, I would argue that even the adoption of the *tortilla* carried with it considerable cultural weight. Bread, of either kind was a staple food, quotidian and yet symbolically resonant, especially in the Catholic tradition. Maize grows more quickly than wheat and requires less care. *Tortillas* were prepared exclusively by women at specific times of the day. All these factors would have meant that the switch from the one to the other inevitably entailed cultural shifts, in this case particularly in the distribution of time in agricultural work and in the sexual division of labour.

This thesis is in part an attempt to understand the histories and stories of such negotiations as these. I thus stress the reciprocity of the exchanges while not ignoring their often unequal nature. There are hundreds of examples of the kind of 'down-up' transmission of culture embodied in the *tortilla* example, where the dominant Spanish group in some measure acknowledged the existence and value of the conquered and marginalised Indigenous group. The investigation of these kinds of exchange is a relatively new field in studies of the imposition of the Spanish empire in the Indies and a difficult one to document because it concentrates on spheres which leave less obvious 'traces' than the reproduction

of institutions or the ideological import of the evangelical work of missionaries. I contend that the writings connected to convents and their inhabitants provides such a source. While certainly a record of the transplantation of an Old World institution to the New World, they also reveal aspects of this transplantation which has less to do with the machinery of imperial domination than with the personal experience of cultural exchange and negotiation.

In the thesis I examine various examples of the range of this exchange, this literary acculturation, and argue that the New World context necessitated the creation of a new kind of writing. In the first three chapters I look at the writing of hagiography in New Spain. In the first two I am concerned with the convent chronicle as the record of an entire community. In third, I turn to the individual, examining the letters written by a nun to her confessor and his reworking of them into her hagiography. The fourth and fifth chapters concentrate on writings connected to the convent which negotiate the 'otherness' of the New World in a much more direct manner; travel narratives and accounts of the spiritual potential of Indian women. The final chapter deals with the arraignment of Mexico's Carmelite convent in the Inquisition on charges of heresy, and analyses what effects such an extreme situation have on the way the cloister and its nuns represent themselves and their community. The general structure of the thesis is thus dictated by type of source material (chronicle, hagiography, epistolary, travel narrative, speculative disquisition, and legal deposition) and in a sense constitutes a an attempt to trace the fortunes of different types of writing and of literary genres in their New World incarnations.

All of these sources reflect the value of the convent in colonial society. This was far from being only symbolic. At the beginning of the seventeenth century convents were among the few colonial institutions that could lend large amounts of money and by the end of the eighteenth century, their financial activities as property holders and lending institutions were considerable. In a society where capital was tied to land or business enterprises, to have such moveable assets conferred great economic significance. The convent chronicles and hagiographies are thus testimony to the networks of patronage in colonial society and to the distribution of wealth within it as well as to the piety of its subjects.[11]

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[11] Asunción Lavrin's work on the socio-economic history of New Spanish convents remains fundamental. See in this context 'The Role of Nunneries in the Economy of New Spain in the Eighteenth Century' in *American Historical Review*, no. 46 (1966): 371-93 and 'Values and Meanings of Monastic Life for Nuns in Colonial Mexico' in *Catholic Historical Review*, no. 58 (1972): 367-87.

The hagiography, of which most of the chronicles I examine in the first two chapters are a compendia and the composition of which I trace in the third chapter, has a very distinct form which relies on well-established conventions. A recurrent pattern in the genre is for the virtuous individual to find herself in conflict with the sinful society around her. In the convent chronicle, this pits the saintly nun against her monastic community. In many of the writings, this conflict is expressed in terms of birthplace, the sinful nuns being insulted variously for being *criollas* (of Spanish blood but born in America), *gachupinas* (Spaniards in America), or *Indias* (Indigenous women), and for exhibiting the supposed characteristics of these peoples. Thus, the *gachupinas* are condemned as *modernas* or lovers of novelty, the *criollas* are *regalonas* or spoilt and indulgent, while the *Indias* are *chocolateras* or eaters of chocolate in a period when it was considered an aphrodisiac.

Throughout the New Spanish *vidas* the sins of the less virtuous find *exemplae* rooted in experience, in the politics of the moment. Greedy nuns add chilli to their food, revealing their decadence and their inability to eat simply, in an opposition where 'decadence' is connected to the new spice discovered in the Indies, and 'simple' qualifies the food of the pure Peninsula. Vain nuns wear numerous jewels, a complaint usually directed at *criollo* women who were considered to be utterly superficial and ostentatious, while lazy nuns are described as *Indias*, ruined by the climate whose pernicious effects were well established. The specificity of these insults reveals how the issues of birth were social and cultural before they became racial. They also reveal the extent to which the chronicle hagiographies were a literature of everyday life in the cloister. In this respect, they are an extraordinarily valuable source because descriptions of this kind do not exist in more official literature. In the manuscript chronicle of the Carmelite convent, for example, the conflict between the reforming nun who is a *gachupina* and the *criollo* monastic community is represented exclusively in the cultural terms I have described above. When *Parayso Occidental*, a version of the same chronicle comes to be published however, the conflict is represented as pertaining only to spiritual virtue and religious orthodoxy.

Complaints about Mexican convents which led to reform in the eighteenth century centred, as the *exemplae* of the chronicles do, on many of the factors associated with the convent's courtliness. The wearing of ornamental habits, including silk veils, was censured as were the large number of servants, the constant demands by the nuns upon their families for money, the enormous number of children allowed to live in the convents, the selling of merchandise within the cloister and, more generally,

the cloister's too frequent contacts with the outside world.[12] The wicked nuns in the chronicles, lazy and indulgent, lulled by the climate and rendered lascivious by the food, who smoke, who watch plays and listen to concerts in their cloisters, whose convents are like small cities where Indians, blacks and children also live and work, demonstrate how the literary model is reworked creatively by the inscribing of the historic moment.

In the fourth and fifth chapters the two very different kinds of sources I examine share the need to assess and represent the direct confrontation with the novelty and difference of the New World. The evangelical project required the narration of the exportation of Spanish holiness and civility to an idolatrous land, but it also needed to affirm that such a land had been rendered completely Christian and orthodox, and was consequently a fitting place for such pious individuals. It is in the representation of travel that the stakes of such a complicated project are made clear. The travel narrative throws into sharp relief, as none other could, this paradoxical desire to both assert the specificity of the New World setting and to deny the pernicious effects of its difference. In examining the case of the foundation of the convent of Corpus Christi for Indian women, I attempt to establish a general model of the relationship between religious literature in the New World and the literature of travel. In order to ascertain the feasibility of the foundation, the authorities demand reports from priests who have travelled the country and have had varied and long experience of ministering to the spiritual needs of Indians. In their reports, the strict association of feminine piety with the hagiographic model is broken. Instead, a writing intimately connected to the reality of the New World context is produced, a writing in which the metaphor of the journey serves to mediate the relation between Spanish man and Indian woman, between the Old World and the New. The testimony of the priests certainly forms part of the classic debate as to whether the Indies were truly Christian (and civilised) or still pagan (and barbaric). However, through its transformation of the intimate material exchanged between priest and Indian woman in the confessional into information of a more general nature, it also contributes to a newer kind writing on the Indies - one which

[12] Cf. Asunción Lavrin 'Ecclesiastical Reform of Nunneries in New Spain in the Eighteenth Century' in *The Americas*, no. 22 (1965): 182-203. Fernando Benítez, *Los demonios en el convento: sexo y religión en la Nueva España* (México: Era, 1985) calculates that in 1673 in San Jerónimo, the convent where Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was a professed nun, there were 87 nuns, of which 78 were choir nuns, 1 non-choir nun, 3 young nuns with no voting rights and 3 novices and 2 servant nuns keeping only the vow of obedience. This would have meant - at a conservative estimate - about 200 servants and slaves plus an indeterminate number of widows, single women and girls who were being educated.

shares the comparative and epistemological stakes of ethnography and which, in this extraordinary case, also considers issues of gender.

The final chapter centres on the trial of the Carmelite convent of San José in the Inquisition on charges of heresy. The chronicle of this convent and the hagiographies of its nuns are examined in the second chapter, and in this last chapter San José and its nuns appear in another guise. In the Inquisition, the nuns and their convent are subject to another system of representation, requiring completely different rhetorical strategies. The hagiographic *topoi* of reforming nun and recalcitrant community are rehearsed to suit the requirements of the Inquisition's forensic rhetoric and their terms become wholly political: a politics connected to institutional struggles in the New World and to the power of different ecclesiastical factions. Once again, questions of the exchange and negotiation of cultural values in the colonial context are raised. The central quarrel between these Mexican Carmelite nuns and their Archbishop is the same as that which brought Sta. Teresa into conflict with the clergy in Spain and eventually led to her successors, Ana de Jesús and Ana de San Bartolomé, splitting the order into opposing factions. In both the Peninsular and the Mexican case, the Carmelite nuns argued about whether their spiritual purity and the integrity of the Carmelite reform was better safeguarded under the jurisdiction of the regular or of the secular clergy. Although the political and ecclesiastical situation was completely different, the Carmelite tradition was transplanted whole to the New World; with all its heritage of fractures and fissures. Significantly, however, the New Spanish version of the tradition splinters in specifically New Spanish ways. The trial of San José came at a moment when relations between Peninsular authorities and the Mexican *criollo* élite were growing increasingly acrimonious. Thus, the testimonies contained as evidence in the trial represent the conflict between the nuns and the Archbishop, and within the convent itself, as a competition between *criollos* and *gachupines* and, crucially, demonstrate the cultural values attached traditionally to each of these groups.

The convent, which seemed initially the perfect institution to transplant to the New World (because of its implied rejection of *any* world) became instead an important arena where political influence was negotiated strategically by the New Spanish élite and the peninsular authorities. Similarly, though the subject matter of the texts associated with convents was supposedly transcendental, these writings became instead histories of the cultural values in the colony. I hope to show that the New World cloister, in its theoretical

distance from the world and in its real submersion in it, in the silence vowed by its members and in their lived communication, writing, and sociability provided the space for the representation of what more usually remained silent; women and their creative role in the New World.

Chapter 1: New World Histories: the Chronicles of Colonial Convents

> *¿Cómo dirá Pater Noster en las horas, la que acaba de sepultar a Píramo y Tisbe en Diana? ¿Cómo se recogerá a pensar en Dios un rato, la que ha gastado muchos en Garcilaso? ¿Cómo?*

Pedro Malón de Chaide *La conversión de Magdalena* (1588)[13]

The reading of secular literature by ostensibly pious women in the Early Modern period compromised the discipline felt to be necessary for their orthodox spiritual behaviour. Such reading gave rise to doubts and speculation about heterodoxy and this anxiety naturally extended to any writing undertaken by such women, and to its relation to profane texts. Both reading and writing could be perilous activities. This chapter looks at the writing of convent chronicles by New Spanish women and examines the ways in which their recording of religious history shows strong secular influences. The chronicles of the New World cloister present not only the possibility of studying the relationship between different genres of writing considered more or less suitable for nuns, but they also situate this study in a very specific cultural and geographic context. The chronicles are complex texts in which 'identity' is fashioned in multiple ways - spiritual (the recording of communities of belief), secular (the history of the New Spanish élite's patronage), institutional (the convent as a social structure) and subjective (the lives of individual nuns). They do this, moreover, at what is an extraordinarily revealing conjuncture in time and space; the formative years of Spanish rule in the New World. The chronicles examined were intended to narrate the history of the successful implantation of Old World convents. They have as an ideal the model of an immutable institution transported to a different space (the convent as trans-historical, trans-cultural spiritual community) but reveal instead the mutability of the convent and, consequently, the interest of studying its specificity as a New World institution.

The New Spanish convent chronicle, the 'history' of a house of nuns, bears a distinct relationship to the kinds of writing found in the diary, the pamphlet and the

[13] [How will she say the Our Father at the right times, she who has come from burying Piramus and Thisbe in the *Diana*? How will she retire to think of God for a moment, she who has spent many on Garcilaso? How?]. *La Diana*, a novel by Jorge de Montemayor was first published in 1559, and reprinted every three or four years until 1585. A second version by Alonso Pérez (1564) and a third by Gaspar Gil Polo (1574) were also very popular. It is not clear which version Malón de Chaide refers to, but the book's immense success is evident.

memoir. Many convent chronicles could in fact be described as collective or cumulative instances of these kinds of writing, intended to immortalise the women and their institution.[14]

The Convent and the City

A constant and overriding concern of the chronicle was to insist upon a public mission to be fulfilled in specific ways which did not violate the private and devotional vocations of the women who professed in the convents. The ability of the chronicle to register the 'openness' of the cloister in its public mission while promoting the private piety of its inhabitants is perhaps most apparent in the description of public ceremonies. The convent of Jesús María in Mexico City, founded in 1578, was originally meant to cater for the daughters and female relatives of *conqusitadores* who were too poor to marry 'honourably', i.e. in accordance with their social and racial status. Hence, in a very real sense the convent was conceived of as a fortress for Spanish racial and cultural values and this explains the eagerness with which Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora (1645 - 1700), Mexican scholar, royal cosmographer and the author of the convent's printed chronicle, exploits the royal cachet that the King's patronage confers on Jesús María.[15] It is a curious fact that he should also reproduce the apocryphal story that the presence of Philip II's illegitimate daughter in the convent is the motive for the Crown's preference; a story which is obviously not considered to detract, but indeed to confirm the absolute legitimacy conferred on the convent by royal favour.

The issue of Sigüenza y Góngora's political position *vis à vis* the Spanish ruling powers is complicated however, for his syncretist approach to Mexican history means he introduces paeans to American nature and Aztec culture to consolidate his exaltation of Jesús María's nobility as a foundation.[16] The nuns are linked in a

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[14] Indeed, they have recently been identified as an intrinsic part of Early Modern and Baroque piety. See for the Italian context the various essays in Calvi Ed. (1992) and in Gabriella Zarri Ed., *Finzione e santità: tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991). For Spain see the work of Alison Weber, particularly *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[15] Cf. Sigüenza y Góngora's opinion of New Spain as overrun with heretics and Jews: *Inficionada la Nueva España con bastante copia de Hereges y Judíos* ... Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, *Parayso Occidental Plantado y Cultivado por la Liberal y Benéfica Mano de los Muy Cathólicos y Poderosos Reyes de España Nuestros Señores en su Magnífico Real Convento de Jesús María* (México: Juan Luis de Ribera, 1683)115. Hereafter *Parayso Occidental*. Sigüenza y Góngora clearly conceives of the cloister as a bastion which will withstand such an invasion.

[16] For a review of Sigüenza y Góngora's cultural syncretism see Irving A. Leonard, *Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora: A Mexican Savant of the Seventeenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1929) and for a more general review of the syncretist debate and its philosophical implications,

pre-history to Aztec vestal virgins, Sigüenza y Góngora dedicating the first chapter of the chronicle to this comparison. By the end of the first book, which deals with the political and economic negotiations necessary for the foundation, the crucial role of the convent in New Spain's claim to 'civilisation' is apparent:

> *[México, ciudad] ... dignamente merecedora de que en los ecos de la Fama haya llegado su nombre a los más retirados términos del Universo, aún no tanto por la amenidad deleitosísima de su sitio; por la incomparable hermosura de sus espaciosas calles; por la opulencia, y valor de sus antiguos Reyes; por la copia y circunspección de sus tribunales; por las prendas que benignamente les reparte el cielo a sus ilustres hijos; conseguido ser la Cabeza y Metrópoli de la América; cuanto porque a beneficio de éste, y de otros innumerables Templos, con que se hermosea su dilatado ámbito se puede equivocar con el Cielo Empíreo, cuando desde ellos, sin intermisión, se le envía a Dios Nuestro Señor el sacrificio y holocausto de sus debidos elogios, y a donde viven los que los habitan con pureza celestial.*[17]

Given this fantastic idealisation of civic space, it becomes clear that the description of lavish foundation and profession ceremonies included in all the chronicles are not only an accurate depiction of the baroque taste for display, but a strategy to affirm economic and political power.[18]

In these ceremonies, the convents are represented not only as 'producers' of saints (as in the hagiography of virtuous nuns) but as repositories of all the power attributed to images and relics in the period. These relics and images, many of which were acquired from the Old World and transported to the New, played a crucial role in the accretion of 'orthodoxy' by a particular convent, and helped to establish it as a purveyor of Christian culture. Nonetheless, an indigenous

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cf. Octavio Paz, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o las trampas de la fe* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1990) especially Part One: 'El Reino de la Nueva España'.

[17] [Mexico; a city deservedly honouring that her name has reached the remotest parts of the universe on the echoes of Fame. She has become the head and metropolis of America not so much because of the wonderful pleasantness of her location nor for the incomparable beauty of her spacious streets, nor the opulence and courage of her ancient Kings, nor the number and gravity of her courts, nor the gifts which heaven has benignly distributed to her sons, but thanks to this and innumerable other Temples with which her expansive area is adorned and could thus easily be mistaken for the empyrean heaven, both because of the sacrifice and tribute owing to God which are sent continually to Him from them in the form of praises and because they are inhabited by those who live in celestial purity] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683) conclusion to Bk. I.

[18] Cf. José Antonio Maravall, *La cultura del Barroco: análisis de una estructura eistórica* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1990) and M. Gloria Martellucci 'Città del Messico, feste religiose e struttura urbana' in Vittorio Minardi Ed., *Simposio internazionale sul Barocco Latino Americano* (Roma: Istituto Italo Latino Americano, 1984) vol. II: 13-30. Also Virginia Tovar Martín, *El Barroco efímero y la fiesta popular: la entrada triunfal en el Madrid del siglo XVII* (Madrid: Ayuntamiento, Delegación de Cultura, 1985). Cf. Jérôme Monnet '¿Poesía o urbanismo? Utopías urbanas y crónicas de la Ciudad de México, siglos XVI a XX' in *Historia Mexicana* 39 no.3 (1990): 727-766.

production of both these kinds of objects is recorded in the chronicles and can certainly be linked to the local character of the cult of saints.[19]

What kind of prestige and value did the display of such images bring to the convent? The display of an image signalled not only the cloister's spiritual worth as a repository of such holy objects, but also brought more tangible profits by encouraging the pious to make donations and other gifts.[20] The fact that the prioress of Sta. Catalina mentions *Zodiaco Mariano*, a book dealing with the images of the Virgin throughout New Spain, their power and the devotions accorded to them, makes apparent the geo-political dimensions of this issue.[21] *Zodiaco* is clearly part of New Spain's 'Marian' cult, which had expanded rapidly since the sighting of the Virgin at Tepeyac, just outside Mexico City, in 1648. The fact that Our Lady of Guadalupe was first seen by an Indian and that her cult attracted the devotion of both creoles and Indians and spread throughout the country, affirmed the orthodoxy of the viceroyalty in terms which, though of clear religious symbolism, are also often 'patriotic' in tone.[22]

The chronicle of Sta. Catalina provides a great deal of information about the place of the image in the convent. A large part of Beatríz de las Virgenes's *Libro de Memorias*, which forms the main part of the chronicle, is given over to the history of the establishment of devotions to the *Virgen del Rosario*. The history takes the form of a first person narrative by Beatríz herself, explaining her reasons for the initiation of such a cult. The power of the image of the Virgin extends to communicating

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[19] For the exportation of the decrees of the Council of Trent to the Americas see Gabriel Guarda, 'La liturgía, una de las claves del Barroco Americano' in Minardi Ed. (1984) vol. II: 470-481. Fernando Cervantes emphasises the huge importance of the cult of saints in the conversion of the New World; "The process of conversion in New Spain was carried out not so much by the teaching of the new doctrines as by the manifestation of a new power." in *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994)62. Cf. Stephanie Wood, 'Adopted Saints: Christian Images in Nahua Testaments of Late Colonial Toluca' in *The Americas* 47, no. 3 (1991): 259-294 for how the instructions left in indigenous people's wills in the period reveal a syncretic spirituality in which the cult of saints played a key role. Cf. Victoria H. Cummins, 'Blessed Connections: Sociological Aspects of Sainthood in Colonial Mexico and Peru' in *CLAHR* 3, no. 1 (1994): 1-18 for an analysis of the high politics which could influence the production of saints in the New World. She compares the careers of Pedro Moya de Contreras (1530?-1592), the third Archbishop of Mexico and Toribio Alfonso Mogrovejo (1538-1606), the second Archbishop of Lima. Contreras died in relative obscurity, despite many a hagiographic narrative of him, while Mogrovejo was eventually canonised.

[20] Cf. the miracle in the province of Zumpango when a *devoto*'s harvest is saved and he sets up a confraternity in thanks. Sta. Catalina *Crónica* 68.

[21] Francisco de Florencia SJ, *Zodiaco Mariano* (México: Colegio de San Ildefonso, 1755).

[22] For an analysis of the birth of Latin American nationalism and its connection to religiosity see Jaques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl et Guadalupe: la formation de la conscience nationale au Mexique (1531-1813)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974) and David A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots and the Liberal State 1492-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See also the review article, Jaques Lafaye & James Lockhart, 'A Scholarly Debate: The Origins of Modern Mexico - Indigenistas vs. Hispanistas' in *The Americas* 48, no. 3 (1992): 315-330.

through visions the number of nuns who will die from an outbreak of plague and Beatríz is at pains to point out that this power is not confined to her personal relation with the image, but is enjoyed by all the nuns and also by their servants; in fact, the entire convent community shares in this privilege:

> *No refiero cosas que ha hecho conmigo, ni favores que he recibido, porque con razón podían todas maltratarme por la más ingrata criatura que ha nacido y nacerá. Porque no se olvide escribo las más grandes que esta Sra. del Rosario ha hecho, así en reformación de la religión como de muchas acciones de devoción que han resultado en monjas y criadas y todo se debe a la Santísima Virgen.*[23]

The politics of ascribing such power to the image is transparent; it brings both money and spiritual prestige to the convent and this is made even more clear in the representation of its efficacy outside the cloister. This kind of 'opening' of the cloister takes very concrete forms. During plague years the image is physically taken out of the convent's church and sent to other convents to ward off infection. Beatríz, as narrator of the history, apologises for such promiscuous use of the image, but justifies it by saying that it increases devotion to the *Virgen del Rosario*.[24] The attribution of miraculous power over nature extends to the image's thaumaturgic energy during a serious outbreak of measles (testified to by a priest) and to the attenuation of the suffering and damage caused by the flooding of Mexico City in 1629. During this flood, a nun praying in the church sees that the image has mud on its gown and this is interpreted as its having left the cloister on its own account to succour the general population. The extensive power of the image is made apparent by the closing comment in the chronicle:

> *Tenemos muchas experiencias que en cuantos negocios se ofrecen en esta ciudad, acuden a pedir socorro al rosario que en este convento se reza y luego vienen a dar gracias por haber tenido buenos sucesos de lo encomendado en él.*[25]

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[23] [I will not recount things done to me personally or favours I have received, because they could all well accuse me of being the most ungrateful creature ever born or to be born. In order that they not be forgotten I write down the greatest (favours) that this Lady of the Rosary has done, both for reform in religion as well as the many devout actions executed by nuns and servants, inspired by Our Lady] Sta. Catalina *Crónica* 64.

[24] She does stop short of sending the image to Veracruz however, sending instead a smaller relic taken from it.

[25] [We have much experience that in many of the activities going on in this city, people come to ask the rosary prayed in this convent for help, and then they come to give thanks because of having had success in what they offered up to it] Sta. Catalina *Crónica* 69.

The whole of the extant chronicle of Sta. Clara illustrates how miraculous intervention on the part of images over nature can become the subject of a specifically historical text, written to record one particular event.[26] The event in question is the fire which destroyed most of the convent. Descriptions of the heterogeneous public (men and women of different religious orders, citizens from all social classes) are designed to emphasise their unified action in putting out the blaze. The motive for such unity is clearly understood as being that of pious devotion, but the expression of this devotion is, significantly, organised around specific images. Thus, the image of Nicolás of Tolentino, which represents Penitence, makes the flames abate when it is placed in front of the church by the Viceroy and the Archbishop.[27] Further on in the narrative, the priests from Sta. María la Redonda bring an image of the Virgin and parade it in front of the fire. They also have a simulacrum which has touched the real image and this is actually thrown into the flames. The calming of the blaze allows a pun on the *Fiat* (the breath/judgement) of a woman which is, amazingly, able to control nature; a rhetorical joke that neatly points to the ultimately miraculous power attributed to images.

The events recounted in Baltasar Cortés y Cuenca's *Relación y Origen de la Imagen del Señor del Rebozo,* which is transcribed in the chronicle of Sta. Catalina, illustrate the unseemly public disputes the value of such images could occasion. This image of Christ proves its power by moving itself to safety during an earthquake. The convent's confessor acts in a suitably cautious manner when he first hears the story, and hushes it up. The female community reacts badly to this however, and the male branch of the order decides to remove the image and to place it in their own monastery of Sto. Domingo. When Sta. Catalina floods, the nuns manage to get their image back temporarily for the thaumaturgic influence it may have. The account of events is confused, but at one point a patron of the convent, Santiago Riberte, Count of Montalbán, intervenes and builds a chapel for the image. The Inquisition had by this point obviously decided that the dispute was a delicate matter and was causing too many problems between the two Dominican

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[26] Fray Antonio de la Rosa Figueroa, *Crónica suscinta del convento de Sta Clara de México en dos cuadernos. Primer cuaderno: desquisiciones cronológicas por Fr ... Segundo cuaderno; descripción del voraz incendio acaecido en la Iglesia y Convento de Sta Clara de México* (México, 1755). Manuscript.

[27] The theme of the fire as divine punishment for worldliness is repeated in the narrative. The Archbishop is described as showing his humility by giving up his coach in order that the nuns be transported in it and instead walking alongside it like a lackey. On the devotion to San Nicolás Tolentino, who was named patron saint of Mexico City in 1611 after the city's relatively light escape from the consequences of a serious earthquake was attributed to his divine intervention, see María Teresa Sepúlveda y H., 'La Cofradía de San Nicolás Tolentino' in *Anales del INAH*, no. 6 (1976): 5-22.

institutions to allow it to continue and so declared the matter closed, confiscating all the relevant papers of the dying nun to whom the image belonged. The chronicle reveals that it is a later prioress who checks the convent archives and petitions for the return of the image on legal grounds, overriding the authority of the male Dominicans. She is successful, but clearly the image was so well known and venerated, perhaps precisely because of the scandals surrounding it, that the Inquisition ordered it should be displayed publicly in the church attached to the convent, rather than inside the cloister.[28]

Images and the ceremonies surrounding them thus clearly present privileged moments in the histories of the convents where the narrative treats in some detail with the 'permeability' of the cloister. A similar opportunity is also provided by the description of funerals of virtuous nuns, which sometimes makes up the largest part of their hagiographies or *vidas*. The importance of a saint's death was intimately connected to her incorruptible body and the disinterment of bones. Given the number of nuns from noble families enclosed in Mexican convents in the period, the interest such families had in recording a spiritual genealogy merged with the wish to record similar genealogies on the part of religious orders to the extent that the chronicle often took the form of a necrology. This is most marked in the case of Sta. Catalina, where the entries for each nun are made in the chronological order of death and are for the most part very schematic *vidas* which include rather spectacular funerary events such as the gravedigger who bites two fingers off Mayor de la Trinidad's corpse in order to have a relic.[29]

The Brigidine chronicle is much more elaborate at the level of content in its development of the social and political significance of each nun's death, though it too takes the form of a necrology. María Catherina's death provides information on how a nun's *fama sanctitas* was spread. The chronicle describes how what must have been *vidas* of this nun are distributed to male religious groups in the form of letters. Receiving such a *vida* seems to have implied entering a relation with the female convent which is described as *hermandad* - brotherhood - but which appears open to all religious orders, not just the corresponding male one, and thus explains the competition and lobbying for them described in the chronicle:

> *... fué tan grande la moción que causó en los seglares la breve noticia que se dió de sus virtudes, en las cartas que se escribieron a los hermanos de la orden, que acudieron muchos que no eran, a pedir que les hicieran esta*

[28] The legal process finishes in 1679.
[29] Sta. Catalina *Crónica* unpaginated.

gracia, por lo que en breve tiempo se dieran doce cartas de hermandad, y se hubieran dado muchas más si nuestra Madre Abadesa no hubiera cerrado la puerta a los pretendientes por ser ya muy crecido el número de los dichos hermanos.[30]

The actual funeral ceremony is one for which invitations are sent out, three hundred printed ones in the case of Theresa Brígida de Jesús. For her funeral, the chronicle includes a list of the confraternities present as well as the number of sermons which were commissioned by the convent and the names of their authors.[31]

Apart from these social and public roles of the image, its importance in organising the representation of spiritual experience in the period must not be underestimated, especially if the emphasis on the 'humanity' of Christ and on the meditation of the Passion is considered. In the chronicle of Sta. Catalina, three nuns and two small girls in their company see a vision while tending to a dying nun, which is only intelligible to them in terms of its similarity to a popular religious image:

> *... la Santísima Virgen muy cerca a las nubes después de las que naturalmente descubrimos y vemos, estaba en otra hecha como de plata, con las manos juntas como la suelen poner cuando la pintan en su Asunción y quedáronse religiosas y niñas como absortas.*[32]

The potential difficulties this 'affect' linking observer to image and its accompanying mystical vocabulary (cf. *absortas* above) could pose for communities made up of women and considered especially vulnerable as far as desire of any sort was concerned, will become apparent.[33] In this same chronicle of Sta. Catalina the male

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[30] [The uproar that the brief news of her virtue caused in the lay population was so great due to the letters which were written to the brothers of the order that many came who were not brothers asking that such a grace be conceded to them. This quickly led to letters of brotherhood being given out and many more would have been given out if our Abbess had not closed the door to the petitioners due to the number of such brothers being already inordinately large] Brígidas *Crónica* 175.

[31] Interestingly, the saintliness of the dead nun was usually expressed through its democratic character, her funeral bringing together people of all classes and races. Maravall has written about the heterogeneous nature of baroque ceremony in this sense and Marina de la Cruz's funeral presents itself as an archetypal baroque event of this sort: *Acudieron al redoble de las campanas desde las más ínfimas hasta las primeras y más preeminentes personas de la República, así para venerar el difunto cuerpo, como para solicitar por reliquia alguna pequeña parte de su pobre ropa* [At the tolling of the bell from the lowest to the highest of persons in the Republic came, both to venerate the dead body or to ask for a little something of her ragged clothing as a relic] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)104. On baroque ceremony see Maravall (1990), especially the appendix 'Objetivos sociopolíticos del empleo de medios visuales.'.

[32] [The Holy Virgen very near the clouds, over and above the ones we naturally perceive and see, was on another one as if made of silver, with her hands together as she is usually represented (lit. as put) when she is painted in her Assumption and the nuns and girls were as if transported] Sta. Catalina *Crónica* 31.

[33] Cf. Mariló Vigil, *La vida de las mujeres en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1986) and Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

compiler Alonso Franco describes the intelligent management of the risks involved when a miraculous event concerning an image occurs:

> *Visto ésto, se volvió la Madre Priora a ella y le dijo ¿Qué haremos? Respondióle la sierva de Dios; callar y no hacer alboroto. Y así fué, que no fué poco entre mujeres y monjas.*[34]

His emphasis is on silence and the minimisation of any potentially scandalous effects, these being reactions which he judges to be especially difficult for women to achieve, but which the virtuous nuns Juana de Sta. Caterina and the prioress succeed in accomplishing on this particular occasion.

Hagiography, the Chronicle and the Convent

> *¿Qué son las vidas de los Santos, sino un dechado, y un espejo ... para mirar en él nuestras fealdades y vicios, y enmendarlos?*

Pedro de Rivadeneira *Flos Sanctorum* (1609)[35]

The hagiographic genre began as a form of writing more connected with a saint's death than with her or his life, and consisted of a compilation of liturgical calendars to mark days when martyrs would be commemorated. The *vida* proper was a secondary development and at first was confined to the lives of hermits.[36] Subsequently, the *vidas* of founders of religious orders and of mystics came to be written and it is this change that is considered as the first to signal the growing popularisation of the cult of saints.[37]

In its beginnings, the *vida* was foremost a text of legal import presented to the Roman curia to substantiate a claim to sanctity on behalf of the deceased by her or his supporters.[38] The promotion of the *vida* as 'proof' of sanctity meant a change

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[34] [Having seen this the Prioress turned to her and said, 'What shall we do?' And the servant of God replied, 'Be silent and not cause a panic.' And so it was; no mean achievement between women and nuns] Sta. Catalina *Crónica* 74.

[35] Quoted in Sánchez Lora (1988)377 [What are the lives of the saints but an example and a mirror in which to look at our ugliness and vices and so ameliorate them?].

[36] Cf. The avid reading of such *vidas* by Inés de la Cruz, one of the Founding Mothers of the Carmelite convent of San José.

[37] Cf. André Vauchez, *La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age d'après les Proces de Canonisation et les documents hagiographiques* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1981); *Désormais toutes les formes et les expériences de vie religieuse pouvaient donner à une* <u>*fama sanctitas*</u>. (18). Cf. also Pierre Delooz, 'Towards a Sociological Study of Canonised Sainthood in the Catholic Church' in *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, Stephen Wilson Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)189-216 and Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[38] Cf. Peña's insistence on his text containing the declarations of eye witnesses of the supernatural events described: *... la relación que han dado las mismas religiosas, que testigos de vista, vieron y tocaron las virtudes de sus amadas Madres y carísimas Hermanas.* [the account the nuns themselves have given, who as eyewitnesses saw and felt the virtues of their beloved Mothers and dear Sisters]. In

of emphasis from miracles at the tomb of the saint to his or her virtuous life; an effective shifting of virtue from the body and its thaumaturgical power to the piety of the life of the saint. This implied a change in the production of hagiography itself, the importance of biographical detail increasing while that of *miracula* (the listing of extraordinary events connected to the tomb and the body) decreased. The supernatural began only to signify confirmation of the saint's status as 'chosen' rather than her or his thaumaturgical power. The representation of saintly death also became more important, thanks largely to the influence of the *Ars Morendi.*

Two distinctive types of *vida* appeared from this process, both extensively diffused but clearly different. The first was a more official form, still used for liturgical purposes, while the second was more popular and became the province of the writer of sermons and the travelling story-teller. In a convent, the *vida* would have been read, on the appropriate day, during mealtimes and recreation, emphasising the genre's festive nature in contrast to other texts which commanded belief or dictated religious practice.[39] This development of the genre was not an entirely smooth one however, the *vida* being seen to pose at first liturgical, then dogmatic, and finally historical problems, all of which can be associated with the growing popularisation of its form. In a curious reversal of historical commonplace, the *vida*'s passage into writing seems to have been an index of its growing popularity.[40]

It was the argument set out by the Jesuit, Pedro de Rivadeneira, that hagiography was an effective didactic tool, which saved the *vida* and in fact led to

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Juan Ignacio de la Peña *Trono Mexicano en el convento de Religiosas pobres Capuchinas, su construccion y adorno en la insigne Ciudad de Mexico* (Madrid, 1728)xvii. Hereafter *Trono Mexicano.*

[39] Cf Michel de Certeau's comments on this and the degree of 'subversive' potential he identifies in the hagiographic genre. *Elle [l'hagiographie] correspond à un <temps libre> lieu mis à part, ouverture <spirituelle> et contemplative. Elle ne se trouve pas du côté de l'instruction, de la norme pédagogique, du dogme. Elle <divertit> a la différence des textes qu'il faut croire, ou pratiquer, elle oscille entre le croyable et l'incroyable, elle propose ce qu'il est loisible de penser ou faire. Sous ces deux aspects, elle crée, hors du temps et de la règle, un espace de <vacance> et des possibilités neuves.* In *L'Ecriture de l'Histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977)278-9. Given this point of view, it is interesting to consider the power of hagiographic models within the convent. In *Trono Mexicano* it is clear that the connection between written and lived *vidas* is close; *En este tan penoso ejercicio y exquisito camino, [vida de Buenaventura Inés] aunque no nuevo en la virtud, y perfección, pues quien leyere las historias y vidas de los santos hallará mucho que admirar en este genero de padecer, y con especialidad se puede ver este ejercicio practicado, por permisión Divina, en la Vida de Sta María Magdalena de Pazzis.* [In this terrible exercise and exquisite path (the life of Buenaventura Inés) though not new in its virtue and perfection, for whoever reads the stories and lives of these saints will find much to admire of this kind of suffering, and especially can see this exercise practised, with divine permission, in the Life of Sta. María de Pazzis] Peña (1728)208. The reading of the lives of saints is mentioned routinely as a pious activity in the New Spanish *vidas* themselves.

[40] José Lezama Lima's characterisation of the Baroque as an 'auditive' culture should be recalled here. In *La expresion Americana* (La Habana: Instituto Nacional de Cultura,1957). The written *vida* would have been read out to groups ranging from the convent audience mentioned to gatherings of pilgrims, family reunions and meetings of members of para-religious organisations such as *hermandades* and guilds.

the Council of Trent promoting it as part of the defence of the Catholic laity from heretical beliefs. The chapter *Sacrosancti et Oecumenia* sets out the benefits of encouraging a cult of the saints through their *vidas* in very pragmatic terms:

> *...ad Sanctorumque imitationem vitam moresque suos componant; excitenturque ad adorandum ac diligendum Deum, et ad pietatem colendam*[41]

The encouragement given to hagiographic narrative by Trent was only part of a policy aimed at the complete reformation of the saintly 'register' as well as the aesthetic of representation connected with it. The Catholic church was in need of contemporary saints who could act as foils to the Protestant martyrs in vogue and Trent sought to provide the masses with stories and pictures to represent these virtuous lives. Sánchez Lora's figures for the printing of hagiographic works in Spanish revealingly sets the peak years as the decades 1600 -1609, 1610-1619 and 1620-1629 with a production of 79, 97 and 124 works respectively. The figures for the last half of the seventeenth century average about 40 works per decade, considerably higher than the average production per decade for the whole preceding century which is 13.[42]

The *vida* was therefore intended for wide consumption, for those who could read and for those who had to listen. Its popularity as well as the official backing it enjoyed must be taken into account when the New Spanish production of this genre is considered. The spiralling number of *vidas* of uncanonized people after 1630 has been connected to competition between different religious orders as well as to the promotion of pious individuals by spiritual directors, religious communities and confraternities.[43] The *vidas* recorded in the various convent chronicles of Mexico City would seem to confirm the hypothesis that hagiography served both these mundane promotional purposes as well as the more legitimate divine ones.

It is perhaps *Trono Mexicano*, the chronicle of the Capuchins in Mexico, that is the most self-reflexive on this issue, acknowledging very straightforwardly the importance of institutional support for a foundation of this type:

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[41] [That they moderate their lives and their habits by imitation of those of the saints, and that they be obliged to worship and love God and to cultivate piety.] Quoted in Sánchez Lora (1988)366.

[42] Sánchez Lora (1988)375.

[43] Sánchez Lora's figures are based on the library catalogue of the humanist Nicolás Antonio. Sánchez Lora (1988) and are intended to give an idea of editorial activity rather than exact numbers of hagiographic publications.

Buenos cimientos y firmes primeros pasos de una fundación religiosa, para su veneración, aumento, y duración, verla aprobada y favorecida de tan eminentísimos excelentísimos e ilustrísimos prelados, y de tan supremos primeros ministros.[44]

The early European manifestations of the cult of saints were linked very closely to popular fervour at a certain site. Later, however, the cult became more centralised and consequently more international. This itself implied the exportation of European saints to the New World. Nevertheless, the local character of such devotion was very strong, no doubt because of the principal function of the saint as an intercessor between the people and the divine. The spectacularly speedy canonisation of Sta. Rosa of Lima (1671) is perhaps the most notable New World example of devotion to a saintly nun and political will converging successfully. The *vidas* included in the convent chronicles must then be seen as part of this drive to establish 'domestic' saints in the Indies. The pressure groups demanding such recognition for a devout person in the New World were similar to those in Spain; religious orders, *hermandades*, guilds etc.. The patterns of attributing sanctity were also the same; hence the ritual disinterment of the *beato* and hermit Gregorio López during the foundation of the Carmelite convent and his re-burial in the convent's church, which constituted a *de facto* liturgical act.[45] Clearly, the attribution of sanctity was an act not only of spiritual but of political moment, where the interests of various groups were in competition.

In this respect it is important to note the significance attributed to tradition in these New World versions of the cult of saints. In order to prove the orthodoxy of the new cults or of the old cults in new lands, history and tradition took on a huge importance. This was often expressed in terms of the divine genealogy of the specific order, allowing the orthodoxy it had accrued to be mapped onto its new location. Thus, in various of the chronicles, the desire to exalt the order's own patron saint is given as the prime motivation for writing. For example, the Brigidine chronicle is full of references to the divine protection enjoyed through the

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[44] [For the solid foundations and steady first steps of a religious institution, for its veneration, flourishing and continuation, nothing could be better than to find it has the approval of such eminent and excellent members of the clergy, of such supreme first religious ministers.] Peña (1728)4. Cf. the equally pragmatic acknowledgement of the convent's social role in providing a place for poor women *... pues habiendo de entrar según su instituto, sin dotes, se conseguía el beneficio de remediarse muchas pobres virtuosas, que por falta de caudal, no podían conseguir su vocación de consagrarse a Dios por Esposas.*[being able to enter without a dowry, according to the rules of the order, many poor virtuous women were saved, who for lack of capital could not otherwise achieve their vocation of consecrating themselves to God as His wives] Peña (1728)249.

[45] Juan Bautista Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* Archivo Histórico del Convento de San José. Unpaginated. Hereafter, AHCSJ.

intercession of St. Bridget. In an analogous illustration of group solidarity, María Azlor y Echeverz, the foundress of La Enseñanza, mentions the approval expressed by the Jesuits for the foundation of the convent she proposes. Rather more spectacularly, her *vida* introduces the motif of the ultimate Jesuit assent; the authorising text from the foundation's saintly father, Ignatius of Loyola, (an obvious forgery), designed to combat ill will against the convent:

> *... revolviendo los papeles de un archivo nuestro, se halló uno de letra de Nuestro Santo Padre Ignacio, en que decía, que si Dios le prestaba la vida por algunos pocos años, haría diligencia de una fundación de mujeres religiosas, que se emplearan en el mismo Instituto de la Compañía con las de su sexo, bajo las propias reglas, aunque sin sujeción a esta religión, sino precisamente a los Señores Obispos.*[46]

Writing the Chronicle through the Vida

Parayso Occidental (1683), the printed chronicle of the convent of Jesús María by Sigüenza y Góngora, shows very clearly from its formal structure the difficulties inherent in the attempt to unite hagiography and history.[47] Sigüenza y Góngora addresses the female reader in the prologue and reassures her that he will employ the verbose and repetitive language usual in hagiographic narratives with restraint. In this respect, it is interesting to note that Sigüenza y Góngora clearly differentiates between the history of the foundation proper, a narrative recounting the sequence of events which is contained in the first book of the chronicle, from the *vidas* of exemplary nuns, which are to be found in the second and third books.

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[46] [Sorting through the papers in one of our archives a letter from our father St. Ignatius was found, in which he said that if God were to give him a few more years of life, he would endeavour to found a women's convent which would be of the same order as his Company in which women would profess under the correct rule, but would not be governed by the order but instead by the bishops.] *Relación Histórica de la Fundación de este convento de Nuestra Sra del Pilar, Compañía de María, llamado vulgarmente La Enseñanza, y compendio de la vida y virtudes de Nuestra Muy Reverenda Madre María Ignacia Azlor y Echeverz* (México: Felipe Zúñiga y Ontiveros, 1793)67. Hereafter Enseñaza *Crónica*.

[47] On the more general problem of defining the generic boundaries between literature and history in this period, see Margarita Zamorra, 'Historicity and Literariness: Problems in the Literary Criticism of Spanish American Colonial Texts' in *MLN*, no. 102 (1987): 334-346. Also, Walter Mignolo, 'El Metatexto Historiográfico y la Historiografía Indiana' in *MLN*, no. 96 (1981): 358-402. On *Parayso Occidental* in particular, see Kathleen Ross, *The Baroque Narrative of Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora: A New World Paradise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Ross attempts a poststructuralist and feminist reading of Sigüenza y Góngora's 'baroque historiography'. She wishes to explain the narrative and rhetorical complexities of this New World history by tying them in to an understanding of colonial subjectivity. This leads her to emphasise New World writing as utterly *sui generis* and its authors caught in a search for a literary originality. In contrast, my approach is to emphasise the continuities between the Old World and the New. In my readings, I argue that the complications and contradictions in rhetoric and in cultural and intellectual politics were inherent to the European tradition, not solely to its New World incarnation. (Ironically, Ross's argument leads her to pay little attention to the great 'mother' of convent chronicles and *vidas*: Sta. Teresa. Cf. my comments at the end of the section of this chapter entitled 'The Didactic Moment: Miraculous Stories.').

Sigüenza y Góngora's chronicle attempts to keep to very tight generic boundaries, separating 'history' from 'hagiography', though its author is aware of the constraints his subject matter and its intended (female) audience impose on him:

> *... aunque me hubiera sido en extremo fácil embarazar el texto, y ocupar los márgenes de este libro con semejantes cosas [notas], siendo mi asunto el escribir historia de mujeres para mujeres, claro está que hiciera muy mal en hacerlo así.*[48]

The resilience of hagiographic narrative structure, however, is proved by the very minor changes it undergoes in the chronicles examined, confirming the formally conservative nature of the classical *vida* and bearing out the charge of repetitiveness made by Sigüenza y Góngora. The continual reference to exemplary events in hagiography can be seen as taking on both the characteristic of repetition and that of 'immanence'. The various instances of humble behaviour on the part of a saintly heroine thus both emphasise her humility while revealing God's presence and the power of His grace in her life, so confirming the 'purpose' of the *vida* to be classically Aristotelian: to amuse the reader or listener while teaching her. One could thus see hagiography as lying at the extreme of historiography, its epiphanic and didactic uses allowing very little room for narrative, the work becoming instead an 'exposition' of the saint's life and of the universe itself as the Divine Book: always already written by God Himself who orchestrates all 'events', acting through the saint. Clearly, historical narrative, in the sense of one which tries to establish cause and effect, has little meaning in this context. Where traditional historiographic discourse would attempt to rationalise, reduce to order, and present a smooth developmental text, hagiography allows interruptions and lacunae and is random and selective in its narrative technique.

The representation of virtue in the narrative structure of the *vida* is perhaps the one most open to these interruptions and particularly to historical force. Michel de Certeau has argued that the representation of virtue rather than that of martyrdom or of a hermit's existence can be seen as an attribute of the established Church's hagiography:

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[48] [Though it would have been extremely easy for me to fill the text and run over the margins of this book with similar notes, as my business is to write a history of women for women, it would clearly have been incorrect to do so] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683) Prologue. Cf. de Certeau (1977)275 on the more general problem of reconciling hagiography with historical representation: *la combinaison des actes, des lieux et des thèmes indique une structure propre qui se réfère non pas essentiellement à <ce qui c'est passé> comme le fait l'histoire, mais à <ce qui est exemplaire>.* Cf. Paul Fouracre, 'Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography' in *Past and Present*, no. 127 (1990): 3-38 for a sensitive approach to the reading of hagiography with the tools of literary criticism and cultural history.

..la <vertu> représente une église établie, épiphanie de l'ordre social dans lequel elle s'inscrit.[49]

In this model, martyrs and hermits predominate when the virtuous individual is in a marginal position, threatened by death. The frequent references to the aspiration to become hermits in these chronicle *vidas* and the extended discussions of evangelism and missionary activities thus draw attention to the problems of judging the Church in New Spain to be in any ultimate sense 'established', as well as to the complementary issue - that such extreme modes of religious life often denoted a reformatory impulse which casts doubt on the Church's orthodoxy:

L'église romaine semble avoir craint que la vie religieuse solitaire et la recherche de performances ascétiques ne conduisent à des déséquilibres.[50]

The consonance of ecclesiastical institutions with the social order that surrounded them can certainly be interpreted as revealing a conservative tendency in hagiography, where the representation of virtue for a didactic purpose can also be seen to have a strategic political and social purpose.[51] The importance placed on 'Heroic Virtue', a concept significantly first used in the canonisation process of Sta. Teresa in 1602, as opposed to miracles performed by the saint, can thus be interpreted as part of this process of the institutionalisation of hagiography. 'Heroic Virtue' as a concept was designed to separate *bona fide* miracle workers from practitioners of magic and the black arts. Candidates had to exhibit the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity as well as the four cardinal ones of Prudence, Temperance, Justice and Fortitude, all to a 'heroic' degree that ensured no demonic interference was possible.[52]

Despite the issues raised as to hagiography's problematic relation to historiography, the *vida* remained the privileged genre for representing the history of religious women and their institutions in the form of convent chronicles and presents the only key available to an understanding of both. The hagiographic form was one with an established tradition and respected canon by the time the New Spanish

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[49] de Certeau (1977)278.

[50] de Certeau (1977)285.

[51] Cf. de Certeau (1977)283; *là, où elle se produit, la moralisation des vertus semble le procédé qui permet de transformer les signes les plus conformes aux règles sociales d'une époque en manifestations les plus vraies (les plus transparentes) du mystère chrétien.*

[52] Cf. Donald Weinstein & Rudolf M. Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom 1000 - 1700* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982)141.

versions were written, but it remained flexible and manipulable, able to respond to the didactic aims pursued through it. These variations came in reply to institutional needs and changes and it is their revelation at the level of narrative, in the form of departures from and modifications of the traditional *vida*, that I will now examine.

Learned and Popular Versions

One type of historical function the chronicles display could be described as 'documentary', being simply the assembling of writings connected to the convent, without any attempt to elaborate a self conscious history of the institution. The extant chronicle of Sta. Clara is a good example of this. It consists of two parts, one an extended description of the events of 5 April 1755, when the convent was burnt down and a second part made up of documents relating to the enormous problems between the then archbishop and the Franciscan order, and the scandal this led to.

The scandal surrounding this convent was clearly so serious as to prove impossible to absorb into a political consensus. The founding mothers of the convent are sent to a Franciscan convent in Spain and the first convent of *Clarisas* (Poor Clares) in Mexico is eventually founded with completely different women. Unsurprisingly, Figueroa stipulates in no uncertain terms that the information he gives in this part of the chronicle must remain secret, its circulation restricted to male Franciscans. It must be kept from the public and, more significantly, from the nuns themselves, it not being a history legitimate for them to know:

> *... el que leyere debe observar un muy riguroso secreto para sí, sin que se le desprenda por algún descuido entre nuestros hermanos alguna noticia (y mucho menos con alguna religiosa de Sta. Clara) del fracaso de las seis primeras fundadoras ni los motivos de su destierro a los reinos de España - noticia peligrosísima y muy escandalosa que sería hoy y en cualquier tiempo si por alguna incauta lengua se difundiera o llegaran las monjas a percibirla. ¿Y qué polvareda se levantaría entre ellas?*[53]

Figueroa presents the documents he has as direct transcriptions of the correspondence in October of 1575 between Rodrigo de Zeguera (*Commisario General*) and Francisco de Guzmán (*Comisario General de Indias*). In order to situate the reader, he explains the context of the letters through a typically

[53] [Whoever reads this must keep it strictly to himself, without letting slip by accident any news to our brothers (and even less to any nun of Sta. Clara) of the failure of the first six founding mothers or of the motives for their exile to Spain - this being a very dangerous and scandalous piece of information if known now or at any point if some careless tongue were to diffuse it or the nuns were to learn of it. What an uproar (lit. dust storm) would be raised amongst them?] Sta. Clara *Crónica* unpaginated.

hagiographic foundation story where a Mexican family decides to consecrate itself to religion. The mother, Francisca de San Agustín and her daughters María de San Nicolás, Isabel del Espíritu Santo, Luisa de Sta. Clara, Mariana de Jesús and Francisca de la Concepción all decide to become nuns while their father enters the priesthood.[54] As an interim measure, while the family waits for the legal approbation, the women decide to set up a *beaterio* with the intention of afterwards professing as Poor Clares under the protection of the Franciscan order. They provide their family home as the site, but at some point in the process a problem arises between the Archbishop and the Franciscans. Figueroa simply lists the friars who intervened on the 'correct' side of controversy which seems to be focused on the presence of a Conceptionist nun in the *beaterio*, whom the Franciscans want to expel and whom the Archbishop protects. The issue is clearly one of authority over the female community, Figueroa stating that even though the *beatas* declare themselves Poor Clares and should thus be subject to the Franciscan order, the Archbishop refuses to recognise their status and continues to intervene in their affairs:

> *... que aunque se protestaban sujetas (sí es que lo estaban de corazón y no por su interés) la Sagrada Mitra las pretendía totalmente independientes del gobierno de la religión...*[55]

A new Papal bull is granted however, which confirms the opinion of the Franciscans that no monasteries or convents should be subject to any authority other than that of the corresponding religious order. As a result, the Conceptionist nun who refuses to subject herself to the Franciscans has to be forcibly removed by a group of soldiers - *un piquete de soldados*.

The content of Sta. Clara's chronicle, which for all its melodramatic touches remains essentially a history of ecclesiastical politics and factions, forms part of all the convent chronicles examined. However, these present varying degrees of elaboration of this 'documentary' base. It is precisely this elaboration which, I will argue, is revealing of the New Spanish cultural context - for, in this elaboration, the place of the convent and its relation to other systems of cultural value and

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[54] The names given are those at profession.

[55] [That even though they claimed they were subject to it {the Franciscan order} (and it is true that they were, for love and not out of any interest) the Archbishop pretended that they should be completely independent of the government of the order] Sta. Clara *Crónica* unpaginated. The relations between the secular and regular clergy, the conflicts which could arise and the role of convents in this politics forms the main subject of Chapter 6.

signification in the colony is represented. Clearly, the gendered nature of these systems is made evident. In the analysis that follows, I will try to trace how the author's sex determined or shaped the way in which they represented the convent in writing. A predictable and simple first observation is that the male writers show their learning through Classical or Theological references and a rhetorically complicated form, these stylistic turns being absent from any of the women's writings until the very late (1793) chronicle of La Enseñanza.

Thus, in the approbations which preface Sigüenza y Góngora's chronicle, the complexity of his task as a historian is emphasised and characterised as a shedding of light on things hidden. A learned distinction between the knowledge needed to represent worldly history (associated with the exact sciences, investigation and diligence) and that needed for the representation of spiritual history (consisting of eternal truths, apparent to all) is set up:

> *No hay duda que se hallan unidas en el autor, la sabiduría no sólo en el conocimiento de las cosas celestiales en sus esferas (objeto de la astronomía que es parte de las matemáticas que profesa) sino en la expresión de las eternas virtudes de las santas religiosas que adoman su Paraíso y la ciencia de las cosas temporales en las muchas noticias que con tanta diligencia, trabajo y solicitud su ingenio siempre explorador de las cosas más antiguas de este reino ha buscado y juntado así para éste como para otros escritos.*[56]

The writing produced by the nuns themselves presents an extremely eclectic narrative structure in which Sigüenza y Góngora's learned apprehensions seem to have no place. The majority of the manuscript chronicles by women do not directly confront the theoretical and methodological issues which cause such obvious discomfort to the male compilers, but they most certainly negotiate them. The most representative example of the kind of historiography women's chronicles provide is the chronicle of the convent of Sta. Catalina de Sena which contains *vidas*, writings by confessors, and accounts of the convent's miraculous images, unaccompanied by any explanatory rhetorical 'machine'.[57] The one-volume chronicle is a transcription made by the nuns of various original manuscript texts which have since been lost. The main text is the *Libro de Memorias* belonging to Beatríz de las

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[56] [There is no doubt that in this author are found joined not only the knowledge of celestial things in their spheres (a subject of study of astronomy which is part of the mathematics he practices) but also in the expression of the eternal virtues of the saintly nuns who adorn his Paradise and the science of temporal things in the many pieces of information which with extreme diligence, work and care his ingeniousness, ever exploring the oldest things of this realm, has looked for and assembled as much for this as for other writings] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683) Approbación Padre Zenteno.

[57] Sta. Catalina de Sena *Crónica*. Hereafter Sta. Catalina *Crónica*.

Vírgenes (1620-1663) who was prioress of the convent six times. On two occasions, the *vidas* of nuns recounted in Beatríz de las Virgenes's book are supplemented by the information contained in Alonso Franco y Ortega's *Historia de la Provincia de Santiago en México: orden de Predicadores en la Nueva España* (1645). Franco's text is also now lost. The structure of the transcribed volume is basically that of a necrology, recording the *vida* of each nun on their death. The founding mothers arrive in 1593 and the *vidas* start with that of the most senior, Mencia de Jesús.

The volume also contains transcriptions of two texts dealing with sacred images discussed earlier. The first is the *Relación y Origen de la Imagen del Sr. del Rebozo* written by Fray Baltasar de la Cuenca. The events connected to the history of this image in the convent take place between 1668 and 1679. The second is a *Relación* of the devotion given to the *Virgen del Rosario* in the convent.

The chronicle of La Enseñanza, the only chronicle written by women to be published, is structurally and theoretically much more sophisticated and is of a significantly later date - it was printed in 1793. In the approbations which precede the text, much is made of the fact the nuns wrote their own history. As an object, the book of the chronicle is impressive, including a prologue illustrated with an engraving (reminiscent of Teresian iconography) of María Azlor y Echeverz standing before a table with books, letters, and the Papal dispensation for the foundation. The sophistication of the book is further emphasised by the fact that each chapter begins with a decorative letter incorporating such exotica as palm trees. The *vida* of the founding mother follows a very traditional pattern, situating María's birth within the wider historical period, going on to describe her childhood, vocation and the foundation attempt. Within the hagiographic narrative, the history of the acquisition and devotion to the image of the *Virgen del Pilar* is also told.

The Brigidine chronicle is perhaps the most impressive example of the more eclectic narrative structure much more characteristic of women's writing of history in the chronicles. It consists of one volume, divided into five sections, covering in total the period 1739-1783, it being possible to identify the various authors.[58] The first is María Catalina de la Concepción, who copies the original Spanish chronicle dealing with the foundation of the mother house in Vitoria (Basque country) and includes a *vida* of St. Bridget.[59] The second chronicler is Benita Francisca de San José, followed by Isabel Antonio de San Miguel, the principal author who writes 100 pages

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[58] *Convento de Nuestra Señora de las Nieves: Crónica.* Hereafter, Brígidas *Crónica.*

[59] The inclusion of the *vida* of the saintly founder of the order in the New World chronicle reveals the importance of linking the New World convent to the traditions and history of its Old World progenitor.

of what is a 230 page document. Inés Joaquina del Sr. San José writes the penultimate section of the history, taking dictation from Isabel Antonio de San Miguel. The last writer is possibly María Antonio de San Pedro who tells of Isabel Antonio de San Miguel's death.[60] That this chronicle was never published and was meant for 'internal' consumption only is evident, especially if the critical accounts of the behaviour of the patrons, various ecclesiastical employees, and of the archbishop himself are taken into consideration. These nuns recorded the history of their convent in this very specific mode of biography and necrology, inventory and legal deposition, a narrative structure significant not only for the actual information such a diversity of genres provides, but also in terms of their strategic deployment as rhetorical devices.

The naturalism of parts of the narrative of this chronicle is startling. The explanation of the difficulties of founding a convent in Mexico City, already saturated with religious institutions, serves as a good illustration of this style:

> *... al considerar lo acabado de los tiempos, que ni los ánimos ni los caudales estaban para nuevas fundaciones, y más habiendo tantos conventos de las demás ordenes, no se podía prometer se abriese camino a nuestros deseos.*[61]

The problems which the nuns have with their patrons are also told in a naturalistic manner. During the journey, the nuns describe one of their main difficulties as having to mediate between their chaperones, the confessor and two of their patron's nephews, who quarrel constantly about matters of privilege and precedence. Later in the chronicle, during the triumphal entry into Mexico City, the patrons argue with the priest in charge of organising the ceremony and he slights them by making sure the procession does not parade past a convent where they have family members. During the dedication of the church, the patrons take offence at the sermon preached and they commission a sermon of their own. Furthermore, they complain that the Viceroy's coat of arms covers their own in the convent's church. At one level, these moments function to signify the real political and religious competition and complication involved in the foundation attempt. The

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[60] The attribution of authorship to María Antonio de San Pedro is made by Anne Sophie Sifert who has made a transcription of part of the chronicle, *Crónica de las monjas Brígidas de la Ciudad de México* (Stockholm University Institute for Spanish and Portuguese: Doctoral Dissertation, 1992). A list of the chronicle's authors and dates of composition can be found in the bibliography.

[61] [Considering the exigency of the times, that not even the spirits nor the capital were ready for new foundations, and more so there being so many convents of the other orders, we could not be sure that the way for our foundation would be opened] Brígidas *Crónica* 51.

narrative is considerably more sophisticated than this however, for on various occasions the psychologically deft naturalism is shown to be a device through which to illustrate the very traditional hagiographic *topos* of *contemptus mundi:* the nuns make clear that they are removed from all the worldliness their marvellous descriptions conjure.[62]

Thus, naturalism is a flexible narrative strategy. Just as it can serve hagiography above, it can also communicate in strikingly emotive terms what must have been a moment of great tension between the various religious and secular authorities in New Spain. The Brigidines take the step of moving out of the convent of Regina Coeli where they are being housed because of the lack of money for their triumphal entry. The reactions to this initiative by the nuns in a matter of public importance illustrates the number of interests attached to the foundation of such institutions. The Archbishop is represented as being extremely angry, though all impoliteness is delegated to the figure of his secretary, Ximenes, who is described as insulting the Abbess and the other nuns repeatedly. The Brigidines end up being enclosed in the house of their patrons. The situation rapidly becomes wholly untenable. Salvation is at hand however, in the form of the Viceroy who intervenes on behalf of the nuns in the most public manner possible, stopping short the Archbishop and his clerics as they come out of midday mass in the cathedral. *Caballeros*, the Viceroy is reported as greeting them in front of the entire congregation, *cuidado con hablar bien de mis Brígidas y no maltratármelas, que las quiero mucho.*[63] Significantly, the political and social implications of such a problem are represented through the language of paternity and affection. The nuns are the Viceroy's favourites, and when the problem is resolved they become the proverbial daughters of the Archbishop.

The strategic expediency of such narrative forms is best illustrated by the apologetic chapter in the chronicle devoted to the death of the patrons. If the earlier part of the chronicle were to be read in terms of psychological naturalism, this chapter, which has the form of a traditional rhetorical valediction, would present serious interpretative problems for the history of the convent, recording as it does a

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[62] Cf. Hayden White; "The authority of the historical narrative is the authority of reality itself: the historical account endows this reality with form and thereby makes it desirable by the imposition upon its processes of the formal coherency that only stories possess." in *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1993)20. Cf. The opposed sociological approach of Weinstein & Bell (1982) which tends to suppose that it is possible to read the reality of a saint's life from their *Vida* without consideration of the formal constraints of representation.

[63] [Gentlemen, take care you speak well of my Brigidines and not mistreat them, for I love them dearly] Brígidas *Crónica* 102.

remarkable change in what could only be described as the attitude of the nuns towards their patrons. The wife of the patron, elsewhere figured as worldly and damned with faint praise, is here transformed into a saintly woman:

> *... pues siendo del carácter que hemos visto y abastada de riquezas y bienes temporales, era su vestido y trato tan honesto y llano como el de cualquiera mujer de más baja esfera; y en los últimos años de su vida se había puesto por devoción el Hábito de Nuestra Madre Sta. Brígida; su vida era tan recogida y devota que todos sus paseos y diversiones eran las rejas de los muchos conventos de religiosas que hay en esta ciudad.*[64]

These contradictions can only be explained by a reading attentive to the formal structure and constraints of the chronicle as well as to its content. What is a *lacuna* for the naturalistic narrative is perfectly coherent in hagiographic terms, and consonant with the demands of this particular type of discourse to pay tribute to the patron of the convent. The 'elasticity' of the chronicle as genre is perhaps most obvious in the recording of the various gifts made by made by patrons in specific chapters. These inventories are not mere lists. They are sophisticated narrative mechanisms, serving the history's need to record such facts perfectly adequately while also allowing for the possibility of comparison and evaluation.[65]

In huge contrast, the kind of writing found in the more formal of the chronicles, excellently exemplified by *Trono Mexicano*, is characterised by an ordered attempt to give a global interpretation of virtue through precise theological concepts. Peña's text is a compilation of various other learned writings connected to the Capuchin convent. In the prologue, he explains that he has based his account of the journey of the nuns, their entry into the city and various of the *vidas* of the nuns, as well as that of their confessor, Francisco Romero Quevedo, on the writings of Fray Marcos de Iragorri. This editorial activity is characterised by him as an elaboration of the spiritual and architectural metaphor that makes the work a *Trono*.[66]

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[64] [For though having the character we have shown and possessing great riches and temporal wealth her dress was as modest and simple as that of any woman of the lowest class, and in the last years of her life, through devotion, she had taken to wearing the habit of our Mother St. Bridget. Her life was so retired and devout that all of her walks and diversions consisted in visiting the many convents which there are in this city] Brígidas *Crónica* 135.

[65] I have set out the lists given in the form of tables for each chapter the inventory refers to in Appendix I. Where a qualification of an object is given, this has been included. These comments go from the purely descriptive (gold, silver) to the evaluative (poor, meagre).

[66] The dictionary of the Real Academia Española has three definitions for *Trono* which Peña may be playing on: 1. *Tabernáculo colocado encima de la mesa del altar y en que se expone a la veneración pública el Santísimo Sacramento* [Tabernacle placed on the altar where the Host is displayed] 2. *Lugar o sitio en que se coloca la efigie de un santo cuando se le quiere honrar con culto más solemne* [Place where an image of a saint is displayed for solemn veneration] 3. *Espíritus bienaventurados que*

The chronicle proper is prefaced by a small text which quotes Urban VII's decrees on the representation of sainthood and protests that *Trono Mexicano* fulfils all of their specifications. There follows an introduction in which a description of the general historical context is given. The wealth of Mexico is emphasised, as well as the success of the evangelical project in the country. In the first part of the chronicle a teleological narrative structure is adhered to, covering the description of the chief confessor's journey to Mexico, the preparation for the nuns' own voyage, including the description of legal problems and the opposition encountered from various of the women's families, the voyage itself, their arrival at Veracruz, their reception and the journey to Puebla, their arrival at the shrine of Guadalupe and finally, the triumphal entry into Mexico City. Accompanying this causal description is a detailed account by a different author, Diego Ribera, of the architecture of the church and its symbolic meaning. In the same allegorical vein, this first part of the chronicle ends with a characterisation of the six founding mothers as 'mystical temples'.

The second part of the chronicle begins by explaining what the Capuchin rule consists of, detailing the disposition of time according to the rule, the periods reserved for contemplation, meals etc., and goes on to discuss the role of the confessor, of penitences and of the status of property in the convent. It then recounts the *vidas* of three of the convent's confessors, Pedro Velarde, Juan de la Peña Butron and Francisco Romero Quevedo. There then follow the *vidas* of fifteen nuns. Towards the end of this second part, the chronicle describes the decision to found another convent in Puebla. This foundation is itself then told, in an almost parallel narrative structure to the one outlined above.

In *Trono Mexicano*, Peña admits that the text emphasises certain virtues at the expense of verisimilitude in order to provide an elegant and coherent theological structure.[67] In a similar way, the sermon on the life of Sor Teresa María de Guzmán by Rodrigo García Flores Valdés, which is one of Peña's sources for *Trono Mexicano*, exhibits a marked preoccupation with rhetorical stylishness and theological learning.[68] The first part of the sermon is taken up by a dedication praising the Archbishop through an elaborate extended metaphor of him as the sun.

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pueden conocer inmediatamente en Dios las razones de las obras divinas o del sistema de las cosas. Forman el tercer coro. [Saintly souls who can know the order of things and divine works through immediate communication with God. They sit in the third choir of angles].

[67] Each founding nun is assigned one principal virtue: Prayer, Virginal Modesty, Discrete Prudence, Constant Perseverance, Chaste Humility and Loving Obedience.

[68] *Sermón en las Honras Fúnebres que hizo el Religiosísimo Convento de S. Phelipe de Jesús de Madres Capuchinas de México a la Venerable Madre Sor Teresa María de Guzmán, Abadesa que fué, y Fundadora de dicho Convento.* (México: Francisco Ribera Calderón, 1707).

The approbations prefacing the text share its literary style and indulge in puns on Flores's name.[69] The *vida* proper is organised around the virtues of the nun's biblical namesake and includes an extremely detailed vision of the natural universe during which she is taken on a neoplatonic tour of the four elements and of the natural substances but does not find repose or perfection in any of them. This journey and display is presented as being analogous to Christ's temptation in the desert and biblical parallels are drawn throughout the sermon.[70] The sermon then goes on to describe each founding mother through a comparison to the days of the creation - conveniently, there are six nuns.

In *Trono Mexicano* itself however, rhetorical artifice is presented as being somewhat problematic. Peña describes his elaborate architectural metaphor of the nuns as 'spiritual temples' as a 'machine' added to the spiritual base in order to exploit its exemplary value. The *aprobación* of Máximo Navarrete also distinguishes form from content and praises Peña for having mixed both in such perfect proportions that the form has itself become sacred. The problem of expressing spiritual truths in narrative had of course been raised by St. Augustine himself, whose *vida* constituted the model for all hagiography. His rejection of a career as professor of rhetoric may be read as a symptomatic distrust of form. Thus his praise of Cicero's *Hortensius* focuses on the force of the text's content; " ... not to sharpen my tongue did I employ that book, nor did it infuse into me its style, but its matter."[71] Notwithstanding this caution, it is precisely the rhetorical figure of metaphor which achieves Augustine's conversion; " ... especially after I had heard one or two places of the Old Testament resolved, and oft-times 'in a figure', which when I understood literally, I was 'slain' spiritually."[72]

Clearly the issue of 'spiritual language' was a contentious one, and by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, much policed by the Inquisition. Not surprisingly, given the Pauline injunctions on women's silence and exclusion from theological knowledge and the recuperation of misogynist patristic and scholastic texts by Renaissance moralists, women's access to such language was disputed.[73]

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[69] The pun is a predictable one on rhetorical flowers. Cf.; *Es su sermón flor de admiraciones o admiración de Flores* [His sermon is the flower of admiration or the admiration of Flores] Flores Valdéz (1707)f232r.

[70] For example, her fortitude during illness resembles Job's and her devotion to prayer is like David's.

[71] St. Augustine, *Confessions* trans. Edward Bouverie Pusey in *Complete Works* R. M. Hutchins Ed. (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1978)14.

[72] St. Augustine in Hutchins Ed. (1978)34.

[73] Maclean (1980) provides an overview of theological, ethical and scientific texts in the period.

Hence Sta. Teresa's cautious introduction to her use of the metaphor of a garden for the soul in her own writing:

> *Habré de aprovecharme de alguna comparación, que yo las quisiera excusar por ser mujer, y escribir simplemente lo que me mandan, mas este lenguaje de espíritu es tan malo de declarar a los que no saben letras como yo, que habré de buscar algún modo, y podrá ser las menos veces acierte a que venga bien la comparación; servirá de dar recreación a Vuestra Merced de ver tanta torpeza.*[74]

Sta. Teresa's claim to simplicity and her linkage of this to her sex is a strategy also adopted by the New Spanish nuns, and is in marked contrast to the learned approach of Peña or other male compilers of convent chronicles. The claim to linguistic simplicity has other social resonances however, connected to the anxiety the popularisation of the *vida* caused the ecclesiastical authorities. The focus of such anxiety was primarily metaphor, analogy, and simile, the rhetorical figures most open to abuse given the exemplary purpose of the *vida*. The description of amazing spiritual events and mundane domestic ones in the same tone (characteristic of Sta. Teresa's writing) was strongly disapproved of by Luis de Granada (1504-88) who attempted to limit the use of examples to strictly biblical ones.[75] Although the Curia was never able to implement such strict control over the form of the *vida*, it is clear that during this period, the text of the potential saint's life was as much an object of scrutiny as the life itself. Thus, André Vauchez explains the instrumental use of the written *vida*, and the risks inherent in the production of such didactic texts for general consumption;

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[74] [I will have to make use of some comparisons which, being a woman, I would prefer not to do and to write simply what I am ordered to, but this spiritual language is so difficult to speak for those who like myself have no learning, that I will have to find some way and probably the greater part of the times the comparison will not fit; at least such clumsiness will serve to amuse Your Grace] Sta. Teresa de Jesús *Vida* Dámaso Chicharro Ed. (Madrid: Cátedra, 1990)192-3.

[75] Dominican preacher and religious writer whose *Libro de la oración y meditación* (1554), along with the work of Pedro de Alcántara signals the move to a more personal style of devotional writing and spiritual experience. Cf. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's description of the kitchen as a philosophical and scientific classroom in *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*, (an autobiographical text modelled on hagiographic forms) for an instance of how such examples could serve as assertions of the feminine domestic sphere. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *Obras Completas* (México: Porrua, 1989)827-847. The *exempla* used by Mendicant preachers (whose sermons Sta. Teresa confesses a penchant for) provided a similar source of anxiety because of their sensationalism. Cf. Dámaso Chicharro in his introduction to the *vida* of Sta. Teresa; *En su afán de ser entendidos y gustados por el pueblo, a veces con vanidad mal disimulada, recurren a <exempla> y comparaciones. Es bien conocido el hecho de que la predicación tenía sus propias técnicas y repertorios concretos de inspiración, como los famosos <bestiarios> o conjuntos de ejemplos que proporcionaban un material aprovechable.*[In their desire to be understood and appreciated by the people, sometimes with ill-disguised vanity, they used *exempla* and comparisons. It is well known that preaching had its techniques and concrete inspirational repertories, such as the famous 'bestiaries' or compendia of examples all of which provided potential material] Chicharro Ed. (1989)52.

Il fallait joindre une Vita en forme à l'appui de toute requête, ce n'était pas seulement parce que Rome voulait disposer d'un dossier d'informations avant de ce prononcer sur la sainteté d'un serviteur de Dieu; le but recherché était davantage de juger si la Vita était propice à appuyer l'intention pastorale qui présidait à toute canonisation et de s'assurer que la vie des saints était retracée de manière à susciter l'imitation de ses vertus, et qu'elle n'était pas entachée d'histoires extravagantes et peu édifiantes ..[76]

In *Trono Mexicano*, Peña exhibits some uncertainty as to the didactic power of the extraordinary type of narrative which made up the usual *vida*, but he finally settles on the fact that devotion will enforce credulity:

[el autor] ... fingiendo metódicamente las reglas de las Historias de esta clase, que demandan moralmente credulidad humana a los entendimientos estáticos de los peregrinos sucesos de las vidas que en el libro se dibujan, las que imitadas por las criaturas del siglo no causara tedio ni cansancio en sus ánimos, aplicándose a leerlas cuidadosamente, pues precisamente sacarán el fruto que deseasen, para su mejor dirección.[77]

The Feminization of Hagiography

Y hay muchas más [mujeres] que hombres, a quien el Señor hace estas mercedes, y esto oí al santo fray Pedro de Alcántara (y también lo he visto yo) que decía aprovechaban mucho más en este camino que hombres, y daba de ello excelentes razones, que no hay para qué las decir aquí, todas en favor de las mujeres.[78]

I have characterised the use of 'Heroic Virtue' for the first time as a criteria of sainthood in Sta. Teresa's canonisation as indicative of the difficulties posed by women and the feminine to hagiographic narrative, and I would now like to trace the implications of what André Vauchez has termed the 'feminization' of the hagiographic model. At its most basic level, this feminization implies an increase in the number of biographies of devout women rather than men. Both Vauchez and Weinstein and Bell link this increase with the rise of the Mendicant orders which they see as emphasising penitence and chastity - quintessential female virtues.[79]

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[76] Vauchez (1981)41.

[77] [The author, executing methodically the rules of Histories of this kind, which morally demand human belief in the ecstatic understanding of the saintly happenings in the lives drawn in the book, which when imitated by secular people will cause neither tedium nor tiredness in their souls, if they apply themselves to reading them carefully, for they will, precisely, harvest the fruit they want, for their better advancement] Peña (1728)vii-viii.

[78] [And there are many more women than men to whom God gives these graces, I heard this from the saint Friar Pedro de Alcántara (and I have seen it myself) who said that women advanced much better along this path than men and for this he gave excellent reasons which there is no need to repeat here, all in favour of women] Sta. Teresa, *Vida* Chicharro Ed.(1989)475.

[79] Weinstein & Bell (1982) and Vauchez (1981).

The popularity of women as spiritual 'subjects' with the Mendicant orders gave rise to a virulent satirical literature which could only but emphasise the specificity of women to the denigrated spiritual model rather than challenge the associations it was based on. Not having the physical mobility or the intellectual freedom allowed to male members of the orders, women sympathisers concentrated instead on devotion to Christ's Passion and the mortification of their own flesh. Most of these women had the status of *beatas* and lived their spirituality in the world, not in convents. The fact that Thomas Aquinas was canonised in this period but none of these women connected to the Mendicants constitutes then a clear valorisation by the Curia of the cloister and of the academy over this unenclosed feminine spirituality.

The importance the enclosure of female spirituality came to have is in turn apparent from the antipathy exhibited by the Church hierarchy to the learned *beatas* at the time. The New Spanish ecclesiastical establishment was not any the more lenient than its Italian counterpart, and the Inquisition cases against secular holy-women are numerous.[80] The Tridentine move for a return to the cloister is exemplified in various of the *vidas* in the chronicles, where the truly virtuous woman eventually decides to enter the convent rather than practice piety in the world. The life of Marina de la Cruz, who only enters Jesús María late in life after having been twice widowed, provides information on the *beata* network in Mexico. When Marina first arrives in the country her *recogimiento* (a key spiritual term at the time, meaning a state of withdrawal from the world through prayer) is noted by a group of women who, since they are able to help Marina with her family's financial difficulties, are obviously economically prosperous as well as devout. The descriptions of Marina's devotions during her lifetime make it clear she is a *beata*, but the chronicle never describes her as such. She creates a circle of admirers and followers and begins to confess with a priest who becomes her spiritual guide.[81] Her husband's decision to move to Zacatecas (the most important and most prosperous mining town at the

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[80] Zarri (1991) and Solange Alberro, *Inquisition et société au Mexique 1571-1700* (México: CEMCA, 1988). For an overview of *beatas* in Spain in the Sixteenth Century and their connection to other spiritual movements see Francisco Pons Fuster, *Místicos, beatas y alumbrados: Ribera y la espiritualidad Valenciana del siglo XVII* (Valencia: Alfons el Magnanim, 1991) Ch. IV. Cf also Jodi Bilinkoff, 'Charisma and Controversy: The Case of María de Sto. Domingo' in *Archivo Dominicano*, no. 10 (1989): 55-66 for an account of one of the most spectacular trials of a *beata* in the period and how the issue of licit and illicit female spirituality came to split the Dominican order. Fernando Iwasaki Cauti's *Mujeres al borde de la perfección: Rosa de Santa María y las alumbradas de Lima* in *HAHR* 73, no. 4 (1993): 581-614, is an extraordinary piece linking the New World saint both to circles of *beatas* in Lima and to the ecclesiastical élite of the city and illustrating how Rosa's spiritual adventures could easily have led to her condemnation by the Inquisition.

[81] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)7v.

time) is represented as the forced departure of Marina from a spiritually pure environment in order that she be tested in an utterly worldly one:

> *... un lugar donde no se trataba sino de los modos con que se adquirían con facilidad las riquezas y con que, después de conseguidas, se habían de gastar en vanidades fantásticas*[82]

Marina's virtue is triumphant even in this atmosphere and she manages to convert many people by her example. For whatever reason, her prolonged activities were not deemed suspect by the Inquisition - unusually good luck for a secular woman of celebrated spiritual fame. On the death of her first husband Marina is described as being forced by her friends to marry a devout man and it was perhaps her married status which prevented her *beata* activities from being identified as a serious threat by Church authorities; she was not a 'public' woman, but subject to her husband. As a widow, she would have belonged to the most ambivalent female estate at the time however, and this almost certainly would have compromised her spiritual activities. One may speculate that her eventual decision to enter the cloister might in fact have had more to do with a wish not to remarry rather than with a change in vocation.[83]

Although the Church hierarchy may have been suspicious of *beatas*, this did not mean that there were no connections between these women and the convent communities. The ease with which the transition from *beata* to nun was possible is illustrated by the many nuns in the chronicles who take this path to enclosure. An anonymous *beata* is mentioned in the writings of Isabel de la Visitación as having inspired her spiritual vocation. She is named by Méndez in his chronicle, who clearly sees no problem in doing so.[84] This woman, Leonor Flores, does most of the business errands necessary for Isabel de la Visitación's profession and it is likely that the Carmelites, who had no servants, may have used an informal network of these holy women to act outside the cloister for them.

The Tridentine wish to 'enclose' female spirituality in convents by exalting the devotional activities of nuns could be interpreted as an attempt to produce a definitively legitimate expression of spirituality for women: contemplation. Hence the

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[82] [A place where only the ways of making money quickly and of how once gained to spend it on absurd extravagances were important] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)60. Cf. Inés de la Cruz's pity for people who live in the secular world where their time is devoted to earning a living in Avendaño, *Crónica* Ch. 2 AHCSJ.

[83] Cf. Vigil (1986) and Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *La educación de la mujer en la Nueva España* (México: Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo, 1985) on the widowed estate. More generally, on the uneasy role of widows in early Christian society and in its philosophy, see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989)145-153.

[84] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 111 AHCSJ.

drive to legislate female experience of both the divine and the diabolic which is evident in the spiritual 'mirror-books' and the Inquisition's investigations of would-be saints who were witches or 'possessed'.[85] Méndez, in his description of the devotions of *beatas* and *terceras* nicely conflates the misogynist and spiritual arguments, exclaiming against the way these women decorate their chosen habits:

> *[los hábitos que] algunas mujeres suelen vestirse diciendo ser de devoción no siéndolo en la realidad, pues les profanan con sedas, listones y otros adornos muy ajenos de la pobreza y espíritu que semejantes hábitos indican.*[86]

thus making it clear that the only conceivable 'place' for female spirituality is the cloister. Contemplation, wherever practised, remains balanced however between mystical 'invasion' and diabolic 'possession' and the recalcitrance of the nuns writing in the chronicles, as well as of the compilers of their lives, to express spiritual experience in any detail is evidence of this continuing ambivalence. The reaction of Inés de la Cruz to Isabel de la Visitación's mystic experiences shows the great caution with which these expressions of spirituality had to be treated. Isabel's visions cause her to levitate frequently and disrupt community life. Inés de la Cruz decides simply to ignore them and Méndez writes that this is due to the natural aversion that Carmelite nuns have, thanks to their 'solid' spiritual training, to 'imaginative' mystical experiences:

> *... las religiosas de esta casa son muy amigas de la doctrina sólida del Bienaventurado Padre San Juan de la Cruz, que tanto procura en ella desnudar al alma de todo lo que es visiones e imaginaciones y sentimientos para que en fe observe con vista sencilla y amorosa se una el alma con Dios.*[87]

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[85] Cf. de Certeau (1977)254 ... *je crois de plus en plus à une homologie structurelle des problèmes posés par la sorcellerie, par la possession et par la mystique ...*

[86] [Some women wear habits claiming to be devout, this being untrue for they profane them with silks, ribbons and other ornaments completely alien to the poverty and spirit which such habits signify] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 69v AHCSJ.

[87] [The nuns of this convent hold dearly the doctrine of our Father St. John of the Cross, in which he tries so hard to divest the soul of everything that is vision or imagination and feelings so that through faith one may observe with a simple and loving look the joining of the soul with God] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 113 AHCSJ. Sta. Teresa's caution in these matters is exemplified in her *Libro de las Fundaciones* (1573) where she writes about the effects of melancholy and fasting on the 'weaker' nature of women and how they can lead to false visions and raptures. Teresa de Jesús, *Libro de las fundaciones* Victor García de la Concha Ed. (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1991) Chapters 7 & 8. Cf. Hufton (1995)368 & 375.

Mariana de la Encarnación curtails her account of Inés de la Cruz's own supernatural experiences in a way that makes clear the interest the male ecclesiastical authorities had in promoting a particular model of spirituality:

> *otras muchas [revelaciones] pudiera referir, y por no ser aficionados a este lenguaje nuestros padres, lo excuso.*[88]

Clearly, reticence - or better still - ignorance, were the safest positions for a woman to take up in relation to spiritual knowledge. The interpretations surrounding *docta ignorantia* (where the poorest in science and most ignorant was also the most eloquent and richest in revelations) are certainly not the only misogynist commonplaces to make up part of the hagiographic narrative and to exhibit ambivalent gains for women. Thus, the 'natural' impossibility for women to fulfil the requirements of a true *contemptus mundi*, according to St. Jerome, meant that Charity and Poverty became feminine virtues rather than Monastic Retirement or Chastity, which were gendered masculine. Unfortunately however, this is clearly, not a model that accommodates easily to life in a convent community and to male conceptions of the place of women (as opposed to the feminine) within it.[89]

One conclusion such findings encourage is that the feminization of the hagiographic model may in fact not get any closer to historical women at all, but instead constitute a move away from their social reality into the realm of received ideas of the feminine. The most clear example of this in the chronicles is in the hagiography of Juan de la Peña Butrón, one of the chief confessors of the Capuchin nuns. When the narrative exalts his chastity, it does this by comparing it to a woman's. Nevertheless, Butrón's feminine virtue has no connection to biological and historical women; it is, of course, better than any which they could possess:

> *¿En la modestia, qué Matrona más retirada, qué doncella la más recogida, qué viuda la más honesta va en un coche con el encogimiento y recato que iba el Sr. Dn. Juan? Corridas siempre las cortinas, sin espejeras para el registro, de suerte que creían que iba en el coche, no lo veían.*[90]

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[88] [I could tell of many other revelations, but because our fathers are not keen on such language, I exclude them] Mariana de la Encarnación *Fundación* 71 AHCSJ.

[89] For an excellent synopsis of the views of the Church Fathers on enclosure for women and of Patristic texts on Virginity in general, see Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'The Heroics of Virginity: Brides of Christ and Sacrificial Mutilation' in *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives* Mary Beth Rose Ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986)29-72.

[90] [In terms of modesty, who among the most withdrawn of grave women, the most moderate of young girls, the most honest of widows, travels in a coach with the unobstrusiveness and decency of Dn. Juan? The curtains always drawn, with no mirrors to look into so that even if one thought he was in the coach, one could not see him] Peña (1728)3.

In a remarkable instance of the feminization of the hagiographic model, Butrón surrenders that most symbolic mark of masculinity - property - to his mother. He thus reverses all 'natural' hierarchies of sex, becoming effectively a 'nun' under the authority of his mother/abbess:

> *... con una obediencia rendida a su madre, a quien asistió, veneró y respetó toda su vida, como si toda ella estuviera debajo de la Patria Potestad, sin poseer cosa de sus rentas, sino todo su madre, como su prelada.*[91]

The rhetorical deployment of gender in this manner has the powerful effect of asserting Butrón's virtue to lie in his giving up of all male privileges, but it clearly also contains a strongly traditional conception of the feminine.[92] This type of narrative moment in the *vidas* goes a long way towards confirming traditional hagiography as a conservative genre, reliant on and illustrative of both literary and more broadly cultural notions of the appropriate and the decorous. The clerical promotion of the cult of saints through carefully constructed hagiographies could thus be seen as a way of accommodating people (in this case women), whose spiritual ambitions would otherwise have caused problems, within the social and religious hierarchy.[93]

From Written Lives to Writing Lives

One of the effects of the Counter-Reformation for women was undoubtedly the possibility to become legitimately learned if within certain limits, preferably as a nun. Gabriella Zarri writes of the evolution of the female spiritual model in this period, pointing out that the emphasis on the reading of devotional books for nuns already placed them in a spiritually educated position, the 'people' being restricted to the reading of the catechism.[94] The acquisition of knowledge through reading

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[91] [With abject obedience to his mother, whom he helped, venerated and respected all his life as if she exercised paternal authority, possessing none of his income, his mother holding everything, as if she were his Abbess] Peña (1728)84.

[92] Cf. the relationship between the Dutch *beata* Elizabeth Strouven and the three priests who gave up their authority over her, inverting the usual hierarchy and becoming her 'spiritual sons'. As in Butrón's case, their exaltation of a particular woman does not preclude using femininity to denote weakness, powerlessness etc. Thus, the priests request Elizabeth's permission before eating anything and indulge in 'women's work' by doing the laundry of the poor in the town, in order to emphasise their extraordinary humility. Florence Koorn, *Elizabeth Strouven, la donna religiosa* in Calvi Ed. (1992)127-152

[93] Cf. Peter Brown on the fact that the conception of 'popularisation' could be changed to mean a democratisation of beliefs from the top down rather than the other way, imposing a kind of saintliness 'removed' from the world in this case. Brown (1981)41.

[94] Zarri (1991).

was however, as I have indicated, a process fraught with moral dangers. Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) wrote worriedly about the untrammelled fantasy such activities could elicit and about the impossibility of punishing the type of sin that was experienced in the very act of reading.[95] The dangers of reading are perhaps most convincingly described by Sta. Teresa herself when she confesses her addiction to *Libros de Caballerías.* The saint's condemnation of secular texts - itself an echo of St. Augustine, becomes something of a commonplace in the writings of the nuns in the chronicles, forming part of the hagiographic 'template' of the New Spanish Counter-Reformation *vida.*

Sta. Teresa was not opposed, however, to reading which broadened spiritual learning. She extolled the gains to be made from studying devotional handbooks, and was in fact against the admission of ignorant women to the cloister.[96] This opinion is reproduced by Méndez in order to legitimise Inés de la Cruz's intelligence:

> *Era la Venerable Madre Inés de la Cruz de muy buen entendimiento (condición que Nuestra Grande Madre Sta. Teresa de Jesús deseó siempre en sus hijas, por saber lo mucho que los tontos dan en que entender una comunidad)*[97]

and it is worthy of note that he should emphasise the benefits of the intelligence of its individual members to the community as a whole.

In the chronicles, access to spiritual knowledge is overwhelmingly expressed through the trope of *docta ignorantia.* The deployment of this trope in the *vidas* reproduces the dichotomy Diane Purkiss describes as inhabiting the female body of the mystic, where the radical disjunction between the divine male voice and the female body it speaks through is dramatised in a spectacle which illustrates the anomalous position of women in relation to language.[98] Nevertheless, the fact that in the chronicles the theatre for this knowledge is the page and not the body makes a crucial difference. In writing, the nun is not only transmitting spiritual knowledge

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[95] See B. W. Ife, *Reading and Fiction in Golden Age Spain: A Platonist Critique and some Picaresque Replies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) for a review of contemporary attitudes to the process of reading.

[96] Cf. Mariana de la Encarnación's own spiritual awakening which was caused by reading manuscript copies of Sta. Teresa's writings. *Fundación* 62 AHCSJ.

[97] [The venerable mother Inés de la Cruz was very intelligent (a condition which our Holy Mother Teresa de Jesús always desired in her daughters for she knew what difficulties stupid people pose for a community)] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 4v-5 AHCSJ.

[98] Diane Purkiss, 'Producing the Voice, Consuming the Body' in *Women, Writing, History 1640-1740,* Isobel Grundy & Susan Wiseman Eds.(London: Batsford, 1992)140-158.

but reproducing it; she is creating.[99] It is interesting in this respect to see how often access to spirituality is figured as access to language:

> *Elevábase el entendimiento en estas ocasiones tan altamente que, admirándose ella misma de lo que razonaba (que solía ser en versos suavisísimos y elegantísimos), exclamaba diciendo: ¡Qué es aquesto! ¿Quién a mí me ha hecho poeta? ¿Quién es quien me ilustra mi entendimiento rudo y le sugiere semejantes palabras a mi torpe lengua?*[100]

This type of access to language is readily mentioned in the chronicle *vidas*, but certainly not reproduced in quotation. Similarly, Méndez's description of Inés de la Cruz's theological knowledge concentrates on her delicate deployment of the correct vocabulary to describe the nature of the Holy Trinity. Her actual words are not transcribed for the reader however:

> *Finalmente llegó a tanta perfección y comunicación con Dios Nuestro Señor y Padre que habiendo pasado dos años de grandes tribulaciones interiores con que purificó Dios su alma para hacerla una tan rara merced como fué ver la divina esencia al modo que en esta vida se puede ver, y Dios se puede comunicar per modum transeuntis. El modo con que refirió esta merced hecha de Dios a su confesor, el Sr. Dn. Alonso, fué particularísima y con términos tan propios especificando la unidad de la Esencia y distinción de personas cómo el Hijo procedía del Padre siendo una misma esencia con el Padre, y cómo el Espíritu Santo siendo una misma esencia procedía del Padre y del Hijo y cómo Dios se comunicaba a las criaturas. De lo cual quedó admirado de oírla.*[101]

Inés's decision to keep a record of her mystical experiences for her confessor goes some way to explaining the reticence of the *vidas*. The kind of

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[99] The importance of interpreting marginal spiritualities such as that of women or that of the ignorant 'mass' as creative rather than simply as deviations from the norm is emphasised by Guido Ruggiero, *Binding Passions: Tales of Magic, Marriage and Power at the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)89.

[100] [Her understanding rose to such heights on such occasions that she herself marvelled at what she reasoned (which was usually in the most gentle and elegant verses) exclaiming she would say 'What is this! Who has made of me a poet? Who illuminates my rude understanding and suggests such words to my clumsy tongue?'] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)88. Later there is another description of Marina de la Cruz's 'possessed' speech which emphasises its elegance and order, a rhetorical dexterity which leaves even the learned *letrados* silent with amazement. Her speech is clearly far removed from the 'non-sense' of mystical transport. Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)93. Cf. also Inés de la Cruz's ability to understand Latin through divine intervention though she can normally not read or speak it.

[101] [In the end she reached such perfection and communication with Our Lord God that, having passed two years of great inner tribulation with which God purified her soul, (he) did her the rare mercy of allowing her to see the divine essence in the way it can be seen in this life, and in the way God can communicate *per modum transeuntis*. The manner in which she told her confessor D. Alonso of this mercy was very special and with such correct terminology, specifying the unity of the Essence and the distinction of the persons, how the Son came from the Father, being of the same essence with the Father and how the Holy Spirit, being of the same essence came from the Father and the Son and how God communicated with creatures. Hearing this he was amazed by her.] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 55v AHCSJ.

subjective experience of the spiritual which is alluded to in them, and figured as perfect speech is meant for a very select public: the nun's confessor. Nevertheless, it clearly remains what Asunción Lavrin describes as an 'opportunity' for the subjectivity which was erased through the novice's vows at profession to be in some measure restored to her in the writing of her *vida*.[102] And it is through the politic deployment of reticence when describing spiritual matters that the writer assures the orthodoxy of her *vida* by differentiating it from the disreputable mystical model of feminine spirituality.[103] This reticence is indicative of a more general evasiveness in the chronicles in the representation of spiritual knowledge. The convent history certainly wishes to lay claims to the sanctity of its nuns, but does not narrate the content of this access to knowledge, though it often narrates the effects of such sanctity; miracles, prophecies etc.. These miracles and prophecies have their representation in the chronicles justified by appeals to their demonstrable 'truth', clearly something much more difficult to claim for an interpretation of a vision or a theological explanation given by an ecstatic nun.[104] Thus, the Brigidine chronicle combines the rhetoric of reticence with an appeal to empirical proof in order to legitimise the narration of miracles:

> *... el decir como se obran estas cosas y quien las obra, pertenece a los teólogos y a nosotras el referirlas llana y sinceramente, advirtiendo que estamos tan lejos de hacer misterios donde no los hay, que con grande dificultad damos asenso a semejantes visiones, pero éstas fueron tan notorias y tienen tantos y tan abonados testigos que sería grosera desatención poner en ellas la menor duda.*[105]

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[102] Asunción Lavrin, 'La *Vida* femenina como experiencia religiosa: biografía y hagiografía en Hispanoamerica' in *Colonial Latin American Review* 2, no. 1/1 (1993): 1-26.

[103] Thus, María Catherina's account of her vision on seeing the Abbess of the convent is cited in the chronicle principally in order to illustrate her reticence. This is emphasised by saying she measured the words of her description with care, while the content of the vision itself is consigned in the narrative to a singularly uninformative and insipid simile - the Abbess is 'like an angel'. Brígidas *Crónica* 154.

[104] For an eloquent explanation of the 'risks' involved in representing such spirituality for apologetic purposes see Peña's comment in *Trono Mexicano*; *Aunque lo substancial de la virtud no consiste en visiones, raptos, revelaciones y profecías, porque siendo sentimientos extraordinarios puede mezclarse en ellos algún engaño, y fuera liviandad de corazón el dar luego crédito a esas cosas, también es temeridad el condenarlas sin suficientes indicios y despreciarlas, cuando los efectos que dejan y causan en el alma son virtuosos y humildes, y los fines son santos.* [Though what is substantial in virtue does not consist of visions, raptures, revelations and prophecies, these being extraordinary feelings and liable to become mixed with some falsity and it would be superficiality of heart to give credit to such things, it is also weak to condemn them without sufficient reason and to dismiss them when the effects that they have and cause on the soul are virtuous and humble and the ends are saintly] Peña (1728)197.

[105] [It is for the theologians to say how these things are done and who does them and for us only to recount them simply and sincerely, warning that we are so far from making mysteries where there are none that we give credit to such visions with great difficulty, but these were so well known and have so many worthy believers that it would be an enormous lack of respect to place the least doubt in them.] Brígidas *Crónica* 169 cf. the later comment made in reference to the thaumaturgic power of the blood of the dead Theresa Brígida de Jesús: *No es nuestra intención calificar por milagroso el caso, pues toca esto a la Sta. Iglesia y a nosotras sólo el referir sencillamente la verdad ...* [it is not our intention to

In a marked example of how deftly the histories manage a spirituality that was often characterised as unruly, and yet could serve the religious advancement of the convent well, the chronicle of Sta. Catalina represents its community as understanding the implications of the access to spiritual knowledge on the part of an individual nun, but also as aware of how an 'ignorant' audience would construe such a spectacle. The ecstatic nun is thus hidden from the rest of the convent:

> *También le mostró este día la Gloria. Quedó tan alegrísima y haciendo tantos júbilos que fue menester mandar no fuesen aquel día allá las religiosas porque decía tantas cosas que era cosa notable, cosa muy extraña en su natural tan callado que apenas se le oía palabra y como las cosas del espíritu son tan diferentes de las de la tierra, míranse con diferentes ojos, y ésto fué la causa de mandar no fuesen aquel día allá porque no se alborotaran.*[106]

The public rumour (that most ignorant of audiences) of this nun's saintliness is such that guards have to be placed around her body. To please the crowd, the nuns manipulate her corpse, lifting its arm so that it blesses the multitude, in a clear illustration of the community's understanding of sanctity's political benefits. The chronicle excuses this extraordinary behaviour, and more generally the inclusion of so many *miracula* in this nun's hagiography by reference to the 'solidity' of the community's spiritual tradition:

> *Aunque somos tan hijas de Nuestro Padre Sto. Domingo, no miramos más que la virtud sólida; quiso nuestro Señor calificar la de esta sierva con milagros patentes.*[107]

In a similar moment of 'true' spiritual knowledge being associated with silence and with distance from anything remotely connected to worldly fame, Peña

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qualify the event as miraculous, a thing only the Holy Church may do, but to recount the truth simply ...] Brígidas *Crónica* 193.

[106] [That day He also showed her His Glory. She was rendered so happy and cried out so joyfully that it was necessary to order that no nun go there that day because she said such incredible things that it was amazing, an extraordinary thing for her character, usually so quiet that one hardly heard a word and as these things of the spirit are so different from the things of this world they are looked upon differently and this was the reason for which that day they {the nuns} were ordered not to enter so that they would not become nervous.] Sta. Catalina *Crónica* 44. The nun referred to is Ana de San Francisco.

[107] [Though we are such true daughters of our father St. Dominic that we only look to solid virtue; t is clear that the our Lord wished to crown the virtue of this servant with patent miracles] Sta. Catalina *Crónica* 46. Cf. the Brigidine chronicle for an assertion of a particular religious order cultivating a model of sanctity different from the disreputable one: *mas lo poco que de esto (la fama de milagros) se cuida en nuestra orden es causa de que no se sepan muchas cosas.* [the little care given to this {the advertising of miracles} in our order is to blame for so few things being known] Brígidas *Crónica* 58.

in *Trono Mexicano* recounts how a nun is demonically possessed and has to be exorcised by her confessor. These events necessarily have to be veiled from the ignorant public which is denied access to the church while Sor Ventura has communion because of the fear that such a spectacle will compromise her virtue:

> *... siendo necesario, por excusar la nota, usar de la prudencia de que no comulgara Sor Ventura con la comunidad, sino después, y cerrada la iglesia, porque el vulgo ignorante y novelero no levantara rumores, que suelen ocasionar ruinas en las personas espirituales.*[108]

Silence and reticence, valued as they are in spiritual terms in the chronicles, have important effects on the representation of the convent community and especially on that of the individual and on the description of her spiritual subjectivity; an intimate knowledge which is necessarily not communal. Where women are privy to this knowledge about each other, it is usually through the relationship of spiritual mother-daughter relations, and exclusivity is their defining characteristic:

> *Sola su Prelada tuvo alguna luz de los coloquios santos que tenía con su crucificado Esposo, pues dijo muchas veces la Venerable Madre Abadesa sor Lorenza Bernarda, a sus religiosas que sor Jacinta tenía y trataba sus negocios con la imágen del Santo Cristo que está arriba en la reja del coro, sin explicar más, ni describir el fondo de la piedra Jacinta.*[109]

Thus, this reticence over the knowledge of spirituality in the community, which functions perfectly well at the level of the hagiographic narrative, poses serious problems for historical representation in the chronicles. The chronicle of Sta. Catalina makes this very clear. The nuns in question confided only in their confessors, in the orthodox manner, but the death of these men, compounded with the lack of curiosity over such affairs (itself also orthodox) on the part of the other

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108 [It being necessary to avoid scandal to prudently prevent Sor Ventura from taking communion with the community, (obliging her) to take it afterwards, with the church closed, so that the ignorant and modish public would not raise rumours, which tend to cause the ruin of spiritual persons] Peña (1728)07. What I have referred to as the problem of 'managing' the effects of spiritual knowledge reach an almost comic intensity in the chronicle of Sta. Catalina where Mayor de la Trinidad's devotion is so great she has a vision of the Host in a flower pot and becomes *alborotada*, (spiritually excited, nervous) a condition which her fellow nuns try to bring her out of, and failing, enjoin her to keep silent about the whole affair. Sta. Catalina *Crónica* 37.

109 [Only her Abbess knew something of the holy conversations that she had with her crucified Husband, for many times the Venerable Abbess Sor Lorenza Bernarda said to her nuns that Sor Jacinta communicated her spiritual matters to the image of the Holy Christ which was up in the choir, explaining nothing more, nor describing the substance of the Jacinta stone] Peña (1728)179. Peña is punning on Jacinta's name - it also being that of a mineral - jacinth, a type of sapphire. The New World was of course legendary for its mineral wealth and minerals themselves were considered semi-miraculous substances. Cf. Anthony Pagden *European Encounters with the New World: from Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993)18-20 on the numinous quality gold possessed for Columbus.

nuns, means there is a profound lack of information in the community about its members as spiritual subjects:

> *De esto pasó mucho; ha habido poca curiosidad en saberlo porque estas siervas de Dios lo comunicaban con sus confesores y ellos han callado y muerto, sin saber las que quedamos cosas que en sus espíritus pasaban, con Nuestro Señor.*[110]

The exercise of caution in spiritual matters underlines the general tendency of hagiography in this period to move away from the mystical instance of virtue to its more controllable didactic manifestations. Thus, the perfect confessor is represented as managing female spirituality by giving credence to a nun's mystical trances not because of her narration of them, but because of the tangible benefits they wrought in her (in this case, extraordinarily pious behaviour):

> *Y según los efectos que causaban estos favores en la Madre Sor Felipa, de fervor, humildad y deseos de padecer, los tuvo por ciertos su confesor, asegurándolos, como diestro Maestro, más de su virtud, por lo que obraba, que por lo que refería.*[111]

The dismissal by her confessor of Sor Felipa's narration of her spiritual experiences adumbrates the reasons behind the generalised narrative reticence I have identified in the chronicles. The fact that her confessor places greater trust in her exemplary acts than in her story-telling to guarantee the truth of the representation of this nun's spiritual knowledge can thus be seen as mirroring the more general tendency in the chronicles to put praxis, rather than speculation, at the centre of these histories of female spirituality.

Native Saints: Writing Hagiography in the New World

The chronicles examined reveal a point of crisis in the representational system provided by hagiography, where the exemplary role of this kind of writing in the cultural formation of individuals (duly defined in orthodox terms of race and gender) was complicated by their colonial specificity. The importance of the

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[110] [This happened often. There has been little curiosity to know of it because these servants of God told it to their confessors and they kept silence and died; those of us remaining not knowing what went on in their spirits with Our Lord] Sta. Catalina *Crónica* 78 *Vida* of Antonia de San Juan.

[111] [And according to the effects of fervour, humility and desire to suffer that these favours caused in Mother Sor Felipa her confessor held them to be true, crediting them, as a good Master, more for their virtue, for what she did, than for what she narrated] Peña (1728)107 *Vida* of Francisco Romero Quevedo.

recognition of the New World as a legitimate 'place' in hagiographic topology, as being the equal in orthodoxy to the Old World, may be gauged by the extended explanation given by Peña of the expansion of the Capuchins to Puebla:

> *Puebla tuvo el consuelo de que México la diera otras Señoras Vírgenes Capuchinas, criollas, hijas legítimas del espíritu y aliento de sus primeras madres Capuchinas, para que vea la Europa, que hay alientos de su tamaño en la América, porque aunque los influjos, los alimentos y los aires pueden debilitar las fuerzas, hasta hacer en los cuerpos más delicadas las complexiones, es poderosa la gracia para formar espíritus gigantes, que aún con menos fuerzas se echan a cuestas el yugo del rigor, que para todos es suave, porque para todos es, aunque pesado, leve; lo cual prueba el mantener hoy en su prístino vigor el Instituto Capuchino en México y Puebla, el delicado cuanto esforzado y varonil esfuerzo de casi sesenta Capuchinas criollas; sin duda si la posibilidad lo permitiera, fueran seiscientas, según la multitud de las que con insaciables ansias lo desean y con importunos ruegos lo pretenden.*[112]

Peña emphasises the legitimate spiritual birth of the Mexican Capuchins - the fact that they are worthy daughters of the Peninsular founding mothers. This extended assertion of equality in spiritual matters pivots, however, on the very difference between the Old World Capuchins and the New, a difference which Peña acknowledges as physical and material, and as having spiritual consequences which only the extreme virtue of the *criollo* Capuchin vocation can overcome.

In terms of 'race', the issue of *criollo* identity is a resolutely historical one. Any links that *criollos* wished to make with the Indian past had somehow to exclude the possibility that they might represent themselves as heirs to anything other than the cultural glories ascribed to the Aztecs in revisionist interpretations of their civilisation.[113] The dangers of other types of inheritance for orthodoxy (religious and racial) are made clear by Peña's comments on the evangelical drive in New Spain:

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[112] [Puebla had the consolation that Mexico gave it other Virgin Capuchin ladies, creoles, legitimate daughters of the spirit and breath of the first Capuchin mothers, so that Europe might see that there are fitting vocations in America, because even though the influences, the food and the air can debilitate strength to such an extent that the complexions of bodies become more delicate, Grace is powerful enough to form gigantic spirits, which, though having less strength take upon themselves this harness of rigour which is gentle for them and though heavy, light - all of which proves that the Capuchin order is kept in its pristine vigour in Mexico and Puebla through the delicate (if forceful and manly) efforts of nearly sixty creole Capuchins. Without a doubt if it were allowed they would be six hundred, given the multitude of those who with insatiable desire want it and with incessant prayers demand it] Peña (1728)253. The theory of the climate of the Indies affecting its inhabitants was articulated as early as 1570 by Bernardino de Sahagún.

[113] On this topic see Anthony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 1990) especially the section 'From Noble Savages to Savage Nobles; the *Criollo* uses of the Amerindian past'. The contemporary definition of race is of course misleading for this period where the issue of *raza* was cultural as well as biological etc. and is perhaps much more accurately conceived of in terms of ethnicity. Nevertheless, I have used the term race in order to foreground the essentialist rationale (*pureza de sangre*) which governed Spanish concepts of orthodoxy and legitimacy, in terms of birth, of nationhood and of religion in the period.

> *... que en el espacio de ciento y noventa años, que dichosamente se cuentan, desde el año de 1521, que quedaron sujetas las bárbaras naciones de esta América a las armas Españolas, hasta el presente de 1711, han echado profundas raíces los corazones católicos [cuanto eran superficiales las creencias paganas].*[114]

In the various chronicles discussed however, there is no attempt at all made to salvage the Indian past for use in the present. Instead, the accepted difference of the New World is used to contrast the purity of the peninsular founding mothers with the impurity of the New Spanish nuns and their convents. For example, when the Brigidines arrive in Mexico, they are lodged in the convent of Regina Coeli and a magnificent entry and then meal, for which the Archbishop has spent 600 *pesos*, is organised in their honour. All this expense and theatricality mortifies the Spanish nuns:

> *... las servían las modernas, tañendo instrumentos y cantando serias músicas de profesión, que para este efecto entraron de la calle, continuando los dos días siguientes al tiempo de la comida y cena, lo que sirvió de no poca mortificación a nuestras Madres fundadoras, aumentándoselas en sumo grado las muchas seglares de todas calidades. Que como es notorio, viven en este convento las Españolas con título de niñas, y las Indias y Mulatas de criadas de las religiosas, que de unas y otras estaba casi llena la pieza, que para el espíritu recoleto fué de gran martirio.*[115]

The familiar conflation of religious laxity with promiscuity is also made, but in this case the promiscuity is less sexual than racial:

> *A esto se juntaba el no tener libertad nuestras Madres fundadoras para seguir su vida regular con la perfección que deseaban, ni con el retiro ni abstracción que pide nuestro Sto. Instituto. Pues cuando menos se pensaba, se hallaban con las religiosas de Regina en su vivienda que, guiadas de su afecto para con nuestras Madres, se introducían en ella a cualquier hora del día. Y a más de éso enviaban muchas veces (con recados) a sus niñas y criadas.*[116]

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[114] [That in the space of one hundred and ninety years, successfully passed since 1521 when the barbarous nations of this America succumbed to Spanish might, until the present year of 1711, catholic hearts have grown strong roots because pagan beliefs were so superficial] Peña (1728)xix.

[115] [The new ones served them, playing instruments and singing profession songs and for this they came in off the street, continuing for two days during lunch and dinner, all of which caused great mortification to our founding mothers, which the presence of many lay people only increased. It is well known that in this convent live the Spaniards with the title 'girls' and the Indians and *mulatas* as servants to the nuns, so that of persons of one sort or another, the room was always nearly full, which was a martyrdom for those of the contemplative spirit] Brígidas *Crónica* 90.

[116] [This was compounded by the fact that our founding mothers were not free to follow their regular life with the perfection they wished nor with the retirement and measure which our holy order demands. For, when least they expected it, they found themselves in their cells surrounded by the nuns of Regina who, guided by their affection towards our Mothers, would come in at whatever time of day. And moreover they continually sent girls and servants with messages and tasks] Brígidas *Crónica* 94.

It is in this chronicle that perhaps the most transparent linkage of purity of birth and purity of spirit is made in the *vida* of Teresa Bernarda de Jesús, whose visceral disgust for illegitimate children must have had tremendous resonance in a society where the number of illegitimate births was huge:

> *... aborrecía tan de veras el vicio contrario, que con tener tan grande caridad del prójimo, como hemos visto, que se lastimaba sobremanera de sus trabajos, de los que eran originados por haber incurrido en este vicio no sólo no se compadecía, sino que haciendo un grande extremo, volvía a un lado el rostro, y escupía, tratándolos de sucios, tal era la pureza que su Reverenda [había]*[117]

The nuns in the chronicles take distance from their New Spanish heritage, extending the logic of inheritance and purity to more quotidian matters such as food, the consumption of which necessarily had implications for the purity of the body. Thus, María Josepha de Gracia is 'born' a Capuchin, her vocation signalled by her rejection of the staple New Spanish food of chocolate:

> *... parece que desde que nació imprimió Dios Nuestro Sr. en aquel tiernecito corazón la vocación para Capuchina, y esposa suya, pues el común sustento de este Reino y primer alimento de las criaturas, que es el chocolate, no lo admitía la niña, como no lo admiten ni usan las religiosas Capuchinas ...*[118]

In the chronicle of La Enseñanza, it is the city of Mexico in its absolute 'otherness' that is figured as threatening María Ignacia Azlor y Echeverz in her state of orphaned innocence:

> *... dejando a esta tierna planta en los más peligrosos ardores de la sangre juvenil, en una de las ciudades populosas del mundo y la mayor de todo este Reino, tierra propiamente extraña.*[119]

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[117] [She loathed the other vice so much that even though she was greatly charitable to her neighbours, as we have seen, so much so their troubles greatly pained her, for those who were the result of incurring in such vice not only did she not have pity, but making a grand gesture she would turn away her face and spit, calling them filthy, so great was her purity] Brígidas *Crónica* 163. Asunción Lavrin calculates the figures of illegitimate births in Lima between 1562 and 1689 as never falling below 40% of the total of births. She considers the Mexican case to be comparable and conjectures that the fact that noblewomen are not prominent in the records is more probably due to 'discretion' rather than to 'perfect behaviour' in élite circles. In Bethell Ed. (1986)333.

[118] [It seems that from the moment of her birth Our Lord engraved on that tender little heart the vocation to be a Capuchin and His wife for as a young girl she could not eat the staple food of this Kingdom and first food of children which is chocolate, just as the Capuchin nuns refuse it] Peña (1728)280 *vida* of María Josepha de Gracia.

[119] [This delicate plant being abandoned, during the most critical burning of youthful ardour, in one of the most populous cities of this world and the biggest of this kingdom; a truly strange land] Echeverz (1793)11.

The colonial court itself is often used in this way to signify the ultimate opposite of monastic existence, especially as regards the role of women. Thus, in the Brigidine chronicle, María de San Antonio is praised for abandoning the worldly comforts her wealthy widowed estate afforded her in order to profess:

> *... que siendo viuda y de avanzada edad, trocó la comodidad y regalo de su casa, por la estrechez del claustro religioso, trayendo al convento todas las alhajas y demás homenaje de su casa.*[120]

The Brigidine chronicle sets up this contrast in a particularly dramatic way when the nuns are imprisoned in the house of their patrons and have no power to define or regulate their cloistered environment. They become objects of curiosity, stared at by the secular courtly visitors to the house. Significantly, it is the feminine gaze of noblewomen, frivolous and worldly, that is most mortifying:

> *La Señora entraba solamente acompañada de las señoras sus amigas que venían no sé si a darle el pésame o el parabién y de paso satisfacer su curiosidad con ver a las religiosas, a quienes ocasionaban gran mortificación, porque no cesaban tales visitas ni de día ni de noche, hasta ir de ex profeso a verlas comer y cenar sin dejarles libertad ni desahogo ni aún para sentir a solas sus trabajos, aumentándoselos con repetidas impertinentes y molestas preguntas.*[121]

These signs of racial, class, and religious distinction are ambiguous however, and ironically María Ignacia, the founder of La Enseñanza, suffers from a misinterpretation of them when she becomes ill in Tudela, Spain. The heat rash which covers her body is thought to be a bizarre tropical disease from the Indies,

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[120] [Being a widow and of advanced years, she swapped the comfort and ease of her house for the rigours of the religious cloister, bringing to the convent all her jewellery and other furnishings from her house] Brígidas *Crónica* 143. Interestingly, María does not give up the comforts of her house entirely, as she brings its contents to the convent when she professes, but she certainly gives up her property of them, transferring it to the convent. Cf. Nuria Salazar de Garza, 'Las construcciones civiles de los conventos de monjas: las casas de Jesús María de México' in *Ier Congreso internacional del monacato femenino en España, Portugal y América: 1492 - 1992* (León: Universidad de León, 1993)217-227 and Rosalva Loreto López, 'Los espacios de la vida cotidiana en los conventos de calzadas de la ciudad de Puebla 1765 -1773' in *Ier Congreso etc.* (1993)201-215 for the architecture of convents and their decoration in the period. Also Antonio Bonet Correa, 'El convento de Santa Catalina de Arequipa y la arquitectura de los conventos de monjas en Hispanoamérica' in Minardi Ed. (1984) vol.I: 221-232.

[121] [The lady entered accompanied only by other noblewomen who came whether to give her condolences or greet her, I know not, but in passing to satisfy their curiosity by seeing the nuns, to whom they caused great mortification for such visits never ceased, by day or night, they even watched the nuns lunch and dine, without allowing them even the release of suffering their pains in solitude, instead increasing them with repeated and impertinent and annoying questions] Brígidas *Crónica* 100. Cf. in this respect the mortification Buenaventura María suffers in the cloister because of her *discreción* (the ultra courtly value of intelligence and ingenuity): *... la discreción que en el siglo la canjeaba aplausos, en la religión la acarreo mortificaciones* [the ingenuity which in the world gained her applause, brought her only mortification in religion] Peña (1728)228.

and she has to suffer the unkindness and prejudice of her fellow nuns who are disgusted by her ailment.[122] Isabel Antonio de San Miguel the first *criolla* prioress of the Brigidine convent is herself represented as the victim of prejudice within the convent.[123] Though the chronicle mounts a defence for her, it does not challenge the racial commonplaces expressed. At points, such as when she is praised as a living picture of the (Spanish) founding mothers, whose spiritual and cultural inheritance she is praised for seeking to emulate, it reinforces them:

> *Toda su vida fué observantísima y así de priora iba adelante con su ejemplo y en todo siguió las huellas de nuestras Madres fundadoras y cumplió con el oficio según vió cómo sus reverendas lo habían ejercitado.*[124]

The chronicles thus approach the incommensurable difference between New and Old World in their representation of the quotidian.[125] As Peña observes, using one of his preferred metaphors for the foundation attempt, the materials in New Spain are of a different nature:

> *[aquellas virtudes] ... con que se sirvió el autor de la Gracia de fabricar en el Nuevo Mundo nuevos géneros de piedras preciosas que transportar desde aquellas partes a la corte celestial de la triunfante Jerusalén.*[126]

Not many of the *vidas* share his optimism about this New World nature's adaptability to divine purposes; at least not when they seek to affirm the purity of the nuns concerned, a 'natural' purity which is inevitably tied to the body, its chastity and its

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[122] Enseñanza *Crónica* (1793)141.

[123] Brígidas *Crónica* 223.

[124] [All her life she was very observant and so as prioress she continued in her exemplarity and in everything she followed in the footsteps of our founding mothers and fulfilled her office according to how she had seen their reverences do so] Brígidas *Crónica* 223.

[125] Carmen Bernand and Serge Gruzinski argue that in the New World the 'aura' bestowed by Catholicism (in contrast to Protestantism) upon objects (their definition is deliberately large: images, relics, saints etc.) meant that such objects had meaning in both material and religious spheres. Thus, religion in the Americas came to privilege the everyday as the field *par excellence* for gauging the authenticity of religious practices. *De la idolatría: una arqueología de las ciencias religiosas* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992)157. Cf. Ruggiero (1993)132 for an adamant assertion of the gendered nature of the quotidian; "Christianity was not merely a religion of priests, churches and formal sacraments: it was a religion of daily life intimately intertwining the transcendental with the social and private life of the everyday. And women were its priests." Danièle Alexandre-Bidon also argues for a spiritual dimension which is at the heart of the feminine domestic sphere. She provides fascinating detail of how cooking times and household tasks in the Middle Ages were measured in terms of prayer in 'Des femmes de bonne foi: la religion des mères au Moyen Age' in *La Religion de ma mère: le rôle des femmes dans la transmission de la foi*, Delumeau Ed. (Paris: Cerf, 1992)91-122.122.

[126] [Those virtues which the author of Grace used to make new types of precious stones in the New World in order to transport them from there to the celestial court of the triumphant Jerusalem] Peña (1728)xi. This kind of reference to the mineral wealth of the America's as a divine gift is not unusual in contemporary literature.

race. Nevertheless, when the stakes of difference are considered lower, the chronicles reveal surprising customs specific to New Spanish society. Thus, the smoking that goes on in the Brigidine convent, and which is given up like chocolate during fasts:

> *... en todos los ayunos de pan y agua y otros de su devoción se abstenía de tomar tabaco, guardando en la celda la caja de polvos desde la noche antes del ayuno hasta el día después de él, en que en tomando el chocolate enviaba por ella.*[127]

In his description of the food the Capuchins eat, Peña also reveals the New Spanish specificity of the community. The nuns eat bread rather than *tortillas*, thus making their distance from the Indian community apparent. Their vegetables however, which include boiled cactus leaves (*nopales*) take them further away from the Spanish model, though the insistence on their food not being seasoned brings them closer to what is figured as the purity of the European model, not only at the level of palate, but of morals:

> *Sin ningún cuidado en los sazones, que sólo miran al regalo y apetito del gusto, y no a la necesidad de la naturaleza.*[128]

Similarly, the Archbishop's concern that on their arrival they be served food which is not too strongly spiced is a gesture which acknowledges their provenance from the peninsula, and thereby their difference:

> *encargando con esmero y gracia que no le echasen pimiento (en este país chile) porque no la comerian.*[129]

The impossibility of separating the cultural significance of the practices described from their religious one is manifest in the racial terminology which becomes the chief tool of definition of *all* practices in the chronicles. The intellectual difficulty of assimilating the difference of the New World to the European female monastic model bears out Nathan Wachtel's general comments on the process of acculturation. Wachtel identifies three spheres in which the process takes place with

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[127] [In all the bread and water fasts and others she was devoted to, she would abstain from taking tobacco, keeping the box of powder in her cell from the night before the fast until the day after it when, while drinking her chocolate, she would send for it.] Brígidas *Crónica* 188.

[128] [Careless of every seasoning, which concern only comfort and the greed of appetite and not the needs of nature] Peña (1728)65.

[129] [Asking with care and politeness that they not put pepper (in this country chilli) because they would not eat it] Peña (1728)91.

increasing success; the mental, the material and the biological.[130] The accommodation to intellectual models of religious spirituality clearly belongs to the most difficult sphere, this being born out by the great degree of uniformity of the New Spanish *vidas*. The quotidian reality of the cloister however, presents a very different arena for acculturation, apparently less problematic because it seems to require no structural or representational change.

The assumption that the recording of these every-day practices requires no representational or structural change in the chronicles must be qualified however by taking into consideration the linguistic difference of the *vidas* and how even this is revealing of their specifically American provenance. This linguistic dimension of the problem of difference was identifiably a general source of anxiety. *Criollos* were supposed to speak a verbose and antiquated Spanish which had similar associations to the climactic effects attributed to the Indies; lassitude and effeminacy. Once again, the complexity of recognising the sphere of signification along which to place the value of practices described in the histories of the convent communities is apparent.[131]

The Didactic Moment: Miraculous Stories

One might conclude as a result of this that an important part of hagiography's status as a popular genre in the period consisted precisely in its permeability. It is in the narration of a host of what I will call 'domestic' miracles that the *vida* exhibits this eclecticism most tellingly.[132] There are tales of overflowing honey pots, miraculously dampened fires, meals that cook themselves etc., most of

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[130] Nathan Wachtel, *Vision of the Vanquished: the Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes* (London: Harvester, 1977) Cf. Ida Altman, 'Spanish Society in Mexico City after the Conquest' in *HAHR* 71, no. 3 (1991): 413-446 and Susan Kellog, 'Households in late Prehispanic and Early Colonial Mexico City: Their Structure and its Implications for the Study of Historical Demography' in *The Americas* 44, no. 4 (1988): 483-494 for intelligent defences of the uses of demographic and institutional history for the cultural history of early colonial society.

[131] The negative characterisation probably also owes something to the criticisms levelled at indigenous languages at the time; that they lacked abstract terms (which were of course absolutely necessary for orthodox religious thought). Cf. Angel Rama, *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* (México: Siglo XXI, 1982)77-88. On these commonplaces see Solange Alberro, *Del gachupín al criollo, o de cómo los Españoles en México dejaron de serlo* (México: Colegio de México,1992) and Frédérique Langue, *De la munificence à l'ostentation: la noblesse de Mexico et la culture de l'apparence (XVII - XVII siècles)*. Unpublished paper presented at the conference 'Acerca de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz', Paris, Maison du Mexique, 4th Feb. 1995 Séminaire Interuniversitaire sur l'Amérique Espagnole, Université de Paris III - Sorbonne Nouvelle. Also, on the ostentation of *criollo* dress see Abelardo Carillo y Gariel, *El traje en la Nueva España* (México: INAH, 1959).

[132] Cf. Chapter 4 and my discussion of the use of *exemplae* in travel narrative for a parallel moment of discursive freedom provided by the didactic intent. More generally on the problem of expanding discourse through examples and other *topoi*, see Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)3-34.

which are told by the amazed cook herself and which would clearly appeal to a wide audience of women. The best example of this kind of narrative dexterity comes in the form of a marginal note by Mariana de la Encarnación to Méndez's chronicle, supplying the story of a miracle he did not include. The roots of this story lie most probably in the fables which would have been the staple of oral story-telling, but the wonderfully funny and irreverent tone is Mariana's own:

> *Siendo novicia tenía a su cargo el corral de las gallinas y estando un día haciéndoles salvado, llamaron la campana para comulgar (y como había de ser la que [oraba] en el acto de comunidad) dióse más prisa para acabar con la ocupación, dió el gallo en meterse el lebrillo de salvado estorbándola a que lo acabase incorporar [sic] y afligida, dióle con el cucharón en la cabeza y quedó muerto; la pobre novicia le metió la cabeza en el salvado y se fué a comulgar pidiendo a Dios la vida del gallo, con gran fe de que lo había de alcanzar; así que salió del coro fué a ver su difunto y hallólo muy brioso paseando todo el corral.*[133]

The *vidas* also include episodes which have a great affinity to the *novella* and are exclusively about women cheating their husbands with the help of the nuns. Marina de la Cruz is responsible for two of these miracles. In the first, she notifies a woman whose husband has been away of his imminent return so that she has time to throw her lover out.[134] In the second version, the woman gets pregnant while her husband is away:

> *En la mucha demora que tuvo cierto hombre en negocios que lo sacaron de esta ciudad, se descuidó su mujer y quedó preñada. Estando, como dicen, fuera de cuenta, y por eso imposibilitada de encubrir su culpa ....*[135]

she goes to Marina for help and miraculously her husband is delayed at the last minute. He is already in the city when he remembers he has left something behind and leaves again, enabling her to give birth before his eventual return.

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[133] [As a novice she was in charge of the chicken run and one day as she gave them bran the bell rang for communion. As she was meant to be praying at the service, she hurried in order to finish but the cockerel ran into the sack of bran, preventing her from closing it. Anxious, she hit him on the head with the ladle and he dropped down dead. The poor novice stuck his head in the bran and went to communion, asking God for the life of the cockerel, with great faith that she would be granted it. When she came out of the choir, she went to see her deceased and found him strutting spiritedly the length of the run] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* marginal note to 81v AHCSJ. Cf. Bartolomé Bennassar, *Un siècle d'or Espagnole* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1982)Ch.XI for an account of the relation between oral and written culture in the period.

[134] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)116v-117.

[135] [During the long period away a certain man had on business which took him out of the city his wife was careless and became pregnant. Being thus, as they say, caught out for the count, and unable to hide her fault ...] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)126.

The influence of popular cloak and dagger romantic comedies can also be traced in the *vidas*, though in this case they influence description rather than action. In the *vida* of Marina de la Cruz, the devil is described as a lover who climbs over rooftops to visit his beloved and can be seen silhouetted against the night sky:

> *Aparecíase otras veces como un Mancebo paseándose por las azoteas y especialmente por la de la torecilla que le servía de celda y como los que pasaban por la calle hiciesen reparo en aquel bulto, que a la luz de la luna y de las estrellas les parecía galán en extremo y cargado de plumas y relumbrones, comenzaron a escandalizarse y a murmurarlo ...*[136]

The most interesting example of how these new narrative forms can take hold and to some extent deform the *vida*, or rather how the vida can exploit them to support lacunae and incoherences, is given in the miracle concerning Inés de la Cruz and a nobleman who becomes her *devoto*. This episode was obviously considered dangerous and censored later in the chronicle's life, but remains legible. The nobleman in question tries to rape a woman but she manages to lock him in a room and go for help. His capture and death are certain until he calls on Inés and she appears and lets him out of the room. He later visits the convent and convinces Mariana de la Encarnación to allow him to see Inés. She is described as being initially angry at this, but later accepts his attentions and saves him again by warning him to leave for Peru when his life is in danger. He asks to be allowed to take a portrait of her with him but she refuses the request.[137] The almost total autonomy of this episode from the moral tone of the rest of the *vida* is astonishing and clearly the reason for its censorship.

Although less blatant in its narrative autonomy because the lacunae it creates are distributed in different texts, the taking of legal possession of the houses left in the chief patron's will for the foundation of San José, as told by

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[136] [Sometimes he appeared as a young man, wandering along the balconies, especially the one of the little tower which she used as a cell. The people in the street who noticed his form, which in the moon and star light seemed to them clearly to be that of a courting lover, laden with feathers and lace, were scandalised and began to gossip] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)90v Reference may be being made here to the very popular work *La Celestina* (1499) by Fernando de Rojas in which Calisto climbs over roof tops and walls to reach the heroine Melibea. Despite laws to the contrary, this play and other works of fiction were to be widely found in the Spanish Indies. See Irving A. Leonard, *Books of the Brave: Being an Account of Books and of Men in the Spanish Conquest of the Sixteenth Century* (California: University of California Press, 1949) for an interpretation of the role of fiction in the imaginative and real conquest of America and for an account of how the royal decrees concerning the exportation and sale of such works were clearly disregarded. For the history of the printing press in New Spain cf. José Torribio Medina, *La imprenta en México (1539 - 1821)* (Santiago de Chile, 1912) 18 vols.

[137] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 52 and Margarita de San Juan *Relatos extraordinarios etc.* 142 AHCSJ.

Sigüenza y Góngora, Méndez, and Mariana de la Encarnación, presents another example of the narrative flexibility of the chronicle. Each of these versions is inspired by passages in Sta. Teresa's *Libro de las fundaciones*, which have themselves been described as 'picaresque histories' because of their irreverent and comic tone.[138] The trope that in order to do God's work the saint must outwit and deceive landlords and even town council men is reproduced in the New Spanish versions when it becomes clear that the houses which the patron Rivera had bequeathed in his will to the Carmelite foundation are inhabited and so must be vacated before the nuns can move in. The Archbishop decides to do this by taking legal possession secretly at night - again, an action with numerous Teresian precedents.[139] He arranges for someone in the house to set up an altar and he arrives in the early hours of the morning to say mass and so consecrate the building and force its inhabitants to leave. Méndez's account is a transcription of Mariana de la Encarnación's, adding only the explanation that the Archbishop used a bell to wake up the neighbours because this reminded him of Sta. Teresa's way of taking legal possession of a building. Mariana claims her account comes straight from the Archbishop's oral version and is very effective at describing the speed and confusion of events as well as the Archbishop's obvious delight in the adventure:

> *... envió un criado suyo que tañese aquella campanilla por todos los aposentos y piezas de la casa llamando se levantasen a oír misa que esperaba su Ilustrísima para decirla. Fué tanto el alboroto, sobresalto y ruido con que se levantaban que parecía día de juicio, por ser mucha la gente que vivía allí, ocupando las tiendas y demás oficinas de la casa donde vivían muy de asiento con sus hijos y mujeres y demás familia, que le sirvió de recreación al señor Arzobispo que fué quien personalmente nos contó esta relación que voy escribiendo. Que le causaba risa ver salir a unos medio desnudos, otros cubiertos sólo con frazadas y algunos en camisa, dando voces que no los podían sosegar.*[140]

The New Spanish versions clearly share Sta. Teresa's own pleasure in narrating the ridiculous vicissitudes of such nocturnal adventures. For Sigüenza y Góngora the episode presents an irresistible opportunity to describe a moment of

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[138] Cf. Weber (1990)128-134.

[139] *Libro de las fundaciones*, García de la Concha Ed. (1982) Ch. 15, 19, 25.

[140] [He sent a servant of his to ring the bell in all the quarters and rooms of the house, calling them to get up and hear mass and that His Reverence was waiting to sing it. The disturbance was such and the surprise and noise with which they got up that it seemed doomsday, for there were many people there, in the shops and other rooms of the house where they lived permanently with their children, wives and other family members, that all this amused the Archbishop who personally told us this story I am writing. That it made him laugh to see some of them come out half undressed, others covered only in blankets and some in their shirts, screaming so loudly nothing could calm them] *Fundación* 82 AHCSJ.

enormous dramatic potential and he does just this, concentrating on the reactions of the rudely awakened inhabitants in detail - 'the atmosphere', as Alison Weber writes of Sta. Teresa's own version, 'is one of comic confusion - bumps in the nights, mistaken identity, exaggerated fears - all resolved happily in the light of day'.[141] Sigüenza y Góngora's version of events bears this description out perfectly:

> *Parecióles a algunos de los vecinos ser efecto de la fantasía del sueño lo que escuchaban, pero como no cesaba la campanilla, ni había intermisión en las voces y golpes, que les parecían formidables por no esperados, saltando de las camas, aún los que presumían de más valientes, se comenzaron a apellidar los unos a los otros, para oponerse a la ignorada causa de tanto ruido: aumentábase éste por instantes en toda la casa con el horroroso estruendo de los domésticos, esforzado aún no tanto con la vocería de las mujeres, que pedían al Cielo misericordia cuanto con los ladridos de los perros y los alaridos y llantos de los muchachos: en unos cuartos todo era pedir las llaves de las puertas, que por estar desatinados y medio dormidos los sirvientes no se hallaban: en otros por buscarlas tropezaban en las mesas y sillas que rodando por el suelo y aun trayéndose consigo los escritorios, persuadían a los menos turbados ser todo aquello originado de que temblaba la tierra.*[142]

Moreover, his framing of this episode within the device of a dream and an (entirely geographically specific) earthquake constitute the kinds of rhetorical effects Sánchez Lora refers to when he claims hagiography as a precursor of the novel.[143]

The Convent and the Family

That the patronage of a convent formed part of a system by which institutional and political power was displayed is indisputable. The family was often

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[141] Weber (1990)130.

[142] [Some of the people thought that what they heard was caused by the reverie of dreams, but as the bell did not stop, nor the shouts and thuds which seemed tremendous as they were unexpected, jumping out of their beds, even those who considered themselves brave started to call to one another in order to discover the unknown cause of so much noise. This increased with each passing moment in the house, what with the terrible noise made by the servants, the not to be underestimated shouting of the women who begged Heaven for mercy, the barking of the dogs and the weeping of children. In some rooms everyone asked for the keys to the doors which could not be found for the servants were inattentive and half asleep, in others in order to look for them they bumped into tables and chairs which, rolling around on the floor and even bringing down desks, served to convince the calmest that everything was due to an earth tremor.] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)44v. Cf. Ross (1994)98, who, in her concern to emphasise Sigüenza's desire for originality, dismisses the idea that the writing of 'any nun' could have inspired his magnificent representation of this episode. Ross suggests *Don Quijote* as a possible source of inspiration for Sigüenza y Góngora, ironically reproducing the values of the patriarchal literary canon she has set out to undo. Once again, I would suggest these slips stem from not according enough importance to the hagiographic element - and the play of gender within in - which I argue is integral to the history Sigüenza y Góngora is writing.

[143] Sánchez Lora (1988)372. Raquel Chang Rodríguez claims the early autobiographies in chronicles, reports and letters to be the foundation of a distinctive Latin American novel which she characterises as, *una escritura transgresora y a la vez participatoria de diversos modelos historiográficos y literarios* [a writing which at once transgresses and participates in various historiographic and literary models] in *Violencia y subversión en la prosa Hispanoamericana, siglos XVI y XVII* (Madrid: Turanzas, 1982)xii.

the vector through which such display was shown. The 'networks' of prestige and patronage in the convents are most evident at this level, with sisters, nieces, cousins etc. of a family group professing in the same institution.[144] Nevertheless, as *Trono Mexicano* makes clear, on profession the novice was supposed to give up all earthly ties (including her family) and to be 'dead' to the world:

> *Unas vírgenes tan recogidas y tan enclaustradas que más parece están sepultadas en el retiro que vivas en el claustro.*[145]

If the court often provides a convenient *topos* of comparison in terms of place for hagiographic narrative, the geography of affections is considerably more complicated.[146] The power of the family to draw the nun back into the world is acknowledged in the Capuchin's rule, where contact is allowed only once a year and is only partial - the nuns may speak to their relatives, but may not see them.[147] In the *Vida* of María Catharina de la Concepción in the Brigidine chronicle, the place of the family in the cloister is the main theme developed, her virtue consisting in her detachment from family affections. The first instance of this virtuous detachment occurs when she sets eyes on the Abbess on visiting the convent with her mother and, in a moment of what could be described as spiritual 'transference', feels totally drawn to the nun. The chronicle, however, makes no attempt to diminish the difficulty of transferring maternal affection, and Isabel Antonio de San Miguel, the writer, describes how naturally affectionate María Catherina was, and how much she

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[144] For an example of how élite families and convents formed a complex social network in New Spain, see Rosalva Loreto López, 'La fundación del convento de la Concepción: identidad y familias en la sociedad Poblana (1593 - 1643) in *Familias Novo Hispanas Siglos XVI al XIX* Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru Ed.(México: Colegio de México, 1991)163-177. Cf. the re-formation of the family within the cloister in the 'spiritual' genealogy linking a nun to her convent 'daughter' and how this relationship was invoked in court cases over the inheritance of cells etc..

[145] [Virgins so retired and cloistered that they seem more buried in retirement than alive in the cloister] Peña (1728)xxi.

[146] Cf. Isabelle Poutrin, 'Souvenirs d'enfance. l'apprentisage de la sainteté dans l'Espagne Moderne' in *Mélanges de la Casa de Velazquez*, no.23 (1987): 331-354 for an attempt to read the history of childhood and its emotions from hagiographic narrative while respecting the genre's symbolic structure.

[147] Cf. the passage quoted above from the Brigidine chronicle on the mortification of being on public 'view' and the more developed explanation of the importance of the mortification of sight in *Trono Mexicano* where 'blindness' to the world extends to seeing as well as being seen: *La mortificación de los sentidos es grande, la de la vista tan rigurosa en lo activo, como estrecha en lo pasivo, esto es, ni ver, ni ser vistas [...] si alguna persona devota, juzgando que hace especial gusto a las religiosas, envía a que vean cosa aseada, singular o curiosa, es para mas mortificación, porque sale como entró - sin verla.* [There is a great mortification of the senses, that of sight is mortified rigorously in the active and strictly in the passive, that is, without seeing or being seen ... if a devout person, thinking to make a special gift to the nuns, sends something nice, strange or curious, the mortification is all the greater, for it leaves as it entered - without being seen] Peña (1728)69.

suffered on her mother's death, despite any rejection of their relationship that may have taken place because of spiritual imperatives:

> *... advirtiendo de paso que este olvido no fué natural como se experimenta en algunas personas que por ser secas y duras de corazón olvidan con facilidad lo que no supieron amar, invirtiendo el orden de la naturaleza, porque nuestra madre María Catharina era de un corazón blando y amoroso, aún para los extraños y para los suyos tan tierno (que como confesó su Reverencia a persuasión de una religiosa que sobre ello la importunaba) cuando le dieron la noticia de la muerte de su madre [...] sintió tan grande dolor como si le arrancaran el corazón.*[148]

Isabel Antonio de San Miguel's confidential style of narration also means that the Brigidine chronicle provides fairly detailed information on the family background of various nuns as part of their *vidas*, a narrative emphasis not found in the other chronicles. María Catharina, whose detachment was so praised, is encouraged in her vocation by her father who promises to settle a large dowry on her:

> *... cuando acariciándola en su niñez le decía: has de ser una monja muy acomodada porque te he de poner una grande renta para que no necesites de nada, y añadía, qué bien has de cantar en el coro, parecerás un ángel, aludiendo a la admirable voz que el Señor le dió.*[149]

When she does finally decide to profess, her relatives take her on a tour of Vitoria to visit all the convents so she can make an educated choice. They are not completely unbiased however. Her uncle, who is also her guardian, wants her to be a Dominican as he is a great friend of the order. There is also pressure to profess in the convent of Sta. Clara as she has family there.

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[148] [Recognising in passing that this withdrawal was not natural, as in some people who are dry and hard of heart and who forget easily what they knew not how to love, thus inverting the order of Nature, because our Mother María Catharina was of a soft and loving heart, even for strangers and for her own family she was so tender (as she admitted to a nun who asked her this) that when they told her of her mother's death {...} she felt such pain it was as if they had torn out her heart] Brígidas *Crónica* 156. The narrative can of course also play on the 'unnatural' in relation to the family, rather than in relation to the virtuous daughter. In the chronicle of Sta. Catalina, Jerónima de la Trinidad's parents nearly succeed in corrupting her with the love of the world by introducing her to potential husbands. The narrative exploits the paradox that this is perfectly acceptable behaviour from the point of view of family economics and politics and yet wicked because of Jerónima's vocation. Her confessor intervenes as a suitable spiritual paternal substitute and reminds her of her promise to consecrate herself to God. She takes the decision to profess and becomes a Dominican *beata*, whereupon she is disinherited by her parents, whose behaviour satisfies the hagiographic drive for both the *contemptus mundi* and for the ultimate persecution of the saintly person to come from where it would least be expected. Sta. Catalina *Crónica* 56.

[149] [When cuddling her as a child he would say, 'You will be a very rich nun because I will give you a grand income so that you lack nothing', and he would add, 'How beautifully you will sing in the choir, you will be like an angel', alluding to the admirable voice the Lord had given her] Brígidas *Crónica* 153.

The *vida* of Tomasina de San Francisco in *Parayso Occidental* provides further information on the differences between the structure of the convent community and that of the family. Tomasina's life seems to exemplify the commonly held beliefs about women at the time. Her beauty means that she is automatically at risk of losing her honour and so first her parents and later her husband insist on locking her up. She lives such a cloistered existence in the secular world that the convent comes to figure as a space of freedom from the limitations her sex imposes on her in a family structure. When she becomes a widow, Tomasina is tempted, not surprisingly, to consider this estate as giving her the freedom from authority (parental and marital) she has had to endure. Thus, she initially disregards the occasional monastic calling she feels and proceeds to spend all the money she has inherited:

> *No era ésto lo que quería nuestra viuda [profesar] sino gozar de su libertad, como en el tiempo de su soltura, ponderando cuán poca había tenido así en el estado de doncella como el de casada, y así no cuidó de la herencia [...] ni respondía a los llamamientos que Dios le hacía para que fuese monja.*[150]

The widow as ambivalent sexual and social figure appears in all of the didactic literature of the period directed at women and it is clear that our hagiographic heroine is not destined to win her spiritual battles in this estate, (even though she has professed as a *tercera* in the Franciscan order) but as a nun. In this *vida* the opposition between the life of the world and the life of the spirit is presented as incommensurable and lying in the nature which desire and love take in each life:

> *No podía ser este amor al mundo sino por tener asegurados en él sus aplausos y conveniencias, y como a éstas sean consiguientes las que llaman obligaciones el mismo mundo, hallábase Tomasina con muchas obligaciones y conveniencias y éstas eran las que únicamente le estorbaban el ausentarse del siglo.*[151]

The story of Marina de la Cruz and her daughter (with whom she professes after becoming widowed for a second time) is equally revealing about the kinds of ties and affection that are licit in the convent. Marina loves her daughter dearly and

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[150] [Our widow did not want to profess but to enjoy her liberty, as in the time of her freedom, ruminating on how little she had enjoyed both in the unmarried state as in the married one, and thus she did not look after her inheritance nor take any notice of the callings God gave her to become a nun] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)188.

[151] [This love for the world existed only because in the world she was assured applause and privileges and as what the world itself calls obligations are dependent on these, Tomasina found herself with many obligations and privileges and it was only these which prevented her from leaving the world] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)187v.

spends most of her time dressing and ornamenting her. God intervenes and kills the daughter in a particularly bloody and spectacular way, leaving Sigüenza y Góngora to comment on worldly affection:

> *... emplean algunas Esposas suyas todo su anhelo en divertirse con el monstruo de la devoción mundana, por cuya causa después de los trabajos que por ello pasaren en esta vida, les espera en lo futuro perpetua muerte!*[152]

His later approbation of Marina's adoption of Inés de la Cruz as a spiritual daughter makes clear that affections in the cloister were precisely differentiated and that the convent represented a space where the affective ties of the worldly family were invalid, and on occasions, sinful. Thus, Inés de la Cruz's vocation is confirmed early in her life when she abandons her mother in the cathedral in order to pray alone.[153] What makes the representation of this very traditional *topos* of *contemptus mundi* so interesting in the chronicles is how often the ties the nuns are represented as having to throw off are connected to the family.

The emphasis on the maternal role as vector for affection and the formation of groups in the convent is often linked to the importance of teaching in the community. The *maestra de novicias* clearly occupied a powerful position in so far as the creation of alliances and the knowledge of individual nuns in the cloister was concerned. This kind of knowledge is invariably represented as intuitive and emotional:

> *... miraba con cuidado los semblantes de las religiosas y cuando veía alguna melancólica o descolorida, la llamaba aparte y le preguntaba qué era lo que sentía, si estaba enferma o tenía alguna aflicción, apretándola (con cariño) hasta que llanamente le confesaba la verdad.*[154]

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[152] [Some wives of Christ employ all their will in entertaining the monster of worldly devotion, because of which, after all the troubles they may undergo for it in this life, perpetual death awaits them in the future!] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683) *vida* of Marina de la Cruz, unpaginated.

[153] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 2v. See also Méndez's description of the friendship between Inés and Mariana de la Encarnación as disembodied: *De dos instrumentos unísonamente templados (dice Plinio) sin que los toque la mano el aire basta para que ambos suenen con melodía uniforme* [Of two instruments tuned together (Pliny says) without a hand touching them, it's enough the air (touch them) for them both to sound with the same melody] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 4v AHCSJ.

[154] [She watched the faces of the nuns with care and when she saw one that seemed melancholic or pale she would call her aside and ask her what was wrong, if she was ill or if something was ailing her, insisting (affectionately) until she told the truth simply] Brígidas *Crónica* 161. The teacher is María Catherina.

The kind of affective community revealed by the anxieties the *maestra de novicias* expresses above is perhaps best illustrated in the Brigidine chronicle where María Francisca, who seems to have undergone an emotionally charged moment on her teacher's death, passes on the story and its emotive thrill to her own pupils. The representation of their reaction in the chronicle is recorded in the first person plural, clearly an indication of its validity as a timeless lesson to what is conceived of as a community of fellow pupils:

> *Y cuando su Reverenda nos lo contaba nos estremecíamos al oír el pasaje, pero su Reverenda lo refería como si fuera cosa común que acaeciera a cada paso.*[155]

The fellow pupils are the readers of the chronicle, and in the case of the Brigidines, no audience other than a nun of the same convent is ever considered. Perhaps the most striking and obvious assertion of a convent identity in this chronicle is the grammatical structure through which the narrative construes a plural 'self' that experiences the history (*nosotras*) and a same plural self that reads the history (*nosotras*). It is the coherence of this device throughout the chronicle that gives it its force in terms of a conception of the text being the history of a group as well as of virtuous individuals.[156] In these chronicles, the history retold can be seen as an important element in the construction of an affective group identity, as opposed to apologetic histories such as Peña's or Sigüenza y Góngora's, which are directed at an audience outside the cloister and whose concern with the writing of history as a didactic exercise is thus necessarily focused differently.

The withdrawal from worldly affection necessary for the truly spiritual affection worthy of nuns is reinforced by the judgement cast on mundane friendships in the convent as being responsible for many of the ills in these communities:

> *Había cobrado a una religiosa singular cariño, de donde se originaban las diversiones, pérdidas de tiempo, chismes y pesadumbres que son consiguientes a estas detestables amistades particulares ...*[157]

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[155] [And when her Reverence would tell it to us we would shudder to hear it but her Reverence recounted it as if it were the most normal thing and happened all the time] Brígidas *Crónica* 209.

[156] This assertion of the convent as 'group' in the narrative structure of New Spanish chronicles falls somewhat short however of the refined conception of communal history displayed by other convent chronicles, fashioned self-consciously by women chroniclers as writings designed to exalt the community and save it from oblivion. Cf. Silvia Evangelisti, 'Angelica Baitelli, la storica', in Calvi Ed. (1992)71-95.

[157] [She had become especially fond of a nun and it led to frivolities, loss of time, gossip, and sadnesses, all of which are the result of these detestable particular friendships.] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)172 Vida de Petronila de San Hildefonso.

In this condemnation, the chronicle echoes Sta. Teresa's judgement of 'particular friendships', and without having to look for psycho-sexual explanations of this anxiety, it seems clear that the breaking up of the community into different groups simply made it more difficult to govern. The punishment of such friendships and alliances which challenged ecclesiastical authority and the union of the convent community is exemplary in its horror. In Jesús María, the corpse of an anonymous nun who sided against the Abbess in a quarrel so serious that one of the nuns involved had to be transferred to another convent, is forced to kneel by the bedside of the Abbess and beg forgiveness.[158] The moral is an utterly Tridentine one: the primacy of obedience over any sort of affective tie.

The hagiography, so simple in its original structure, becomes hugely complex in these New Spanish versions. The deployment of *exemplae*, meant to define the saintly individual more precisely through comparison with wicked individuals, takes on a narrative life much more independent than this contrasting function implies. Although the virtuous individual may be transcendentally good, the wicked nuns who emerge from the chronicle *exemplae* are far from abstract. In this chapter, I hope to have shown how in writing their chronicle histories through the *vida*, the nuns and the male compilers significantly modify the genre in ways which provide insights into the cultural universe inhabited by these women and their institutions.

[158] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)177v

Chapter 2: The Convent of San José and the Mexican Carmelites.

In this chapter I will turn to the manuscript and printed chronicles of the foundation of the first Carmelite convent in Mexico. They provide an excellent opportunity for a case study of many of the issues I have outlined in the previous chapter, principally through their dramatisation of the ways in which an inherited tradition, in this instance that of Teresian reform, was transformed by the New World context. The convent of San José is at once a completely new foundation and one predicated on the reform of established notions of *clausura*. This paradox of reform, of the ancient within the new, was clearly inherited from the Discalced Carmelite convents in Spain. San José and its nuns reappear at the centre of an Inquisition trial for heresy in the final chapter of the thesis, and it could be argued that in this the Mexican Carmelites prove themselves to be true to even the more chequered episodes of the history of the order in the Peninsula, which included Sta. Teresa's investigation by the Holy Office on suspicion of possible heterodoxy. The chronicles I review in this chapter provide a crucial counterpoint to my later analysis of how the convent and its nuns, and the traditions they embody, are represented in the Inquisition.

The richness and variety of the chronicle histories of San José's is impressive. There is material written by the founding nuns themselves as well as three compendium versions by different male authors, one a secular academic (Sigüenza y Góngora), one a Dominican preparing a general history of the Carmelite order (Avendaño) and the other a chaplain of the convent writing a history of its foundation (Méndez).[159]

In these chronicles, the action of the virtuous reforming individual signifies not only a distancing from the past, in the sense of the revolution of practices implied by reform, but also a return to an original purity. Reform in these histories thus challenges

[159] The influence on both the writing nuns and the male compilers of Teresa de Jesús's own autobiography cannot be underestimated. Her writings were clearly available in the convents in manuscript and later printed form. It is Inés de la Cruz's (the chief reforming nun) *vida* which develops the Teresian parallels most systematically. She describes herself as avidly reading the *vidas* of hermits as a child as well as 'mirror' books. Later, when her father decides to go with his family to the Indies, Inés sees in this her opportunity for martyrdom, in the way Sta. Teresa wished to die at the hands of the Moors. Inés also reproduces Sta. Teresa's preference for Jesuit confessors. It is however Sta. Teresa's affirmation of the spiritual benefits of reading holy books that is most often alluded to by the nuns. In the *Relación de unas cositas etc.* the author reproduces Sta. Teresa's reading of profane books (in this case plays and novels rather than *libros de caballerías*) and it is a vision that converts her to spiritual texts. *Relación de unas cositas etc.* 194 AHCSJ.

and changes, but within a narrative framework which works to neutralise any of the more disturbing implications of revolution.[160]

Tradition

> *Porque es donaire del valor divino vencer con azucenas, triunfar con rosas, sujetando a elefantes demonios con mujeres, palomas. No hay palabras con que ponderar la majestad con que en ellos [conventos] se celebra el Divino culto, la música, los olores, la grandeza de sus templos, limpieza de altares y asistencia en sus coros.*[161]

Agustín de Vetancurt, *Teatro Mexicano: descripción breve de los sucessos exemplares, históricos, políticos, militares y religiosos del Nuevo Mundo Occidental de las Indias* (Mexico:María de Benavides, 1698)

The establishment and piety of convents played an important role in legitimising apologetic histories of the Colonial world. When reading Vetancurt's description, it is interesting to take into account the dispositions of the Council of Trent on the building of convents within city walls. It becomes clear at this point that the motivations behind wanting convents in the centre of cities have become considerably more complex than the Council's original concern over the safety of female communities. In *Parayso Occidental* Sigüenza y Góngora tells how the first site selected for the convent of Jesús María was a disastrous choice because it was too removed from the centre of the city and therefore few people went to hear mass there, and the nuns found it difficult to commission sermons. There is a similarly revealing commentary on importance of the choice of a suitable site when the Archbishop and other patrons, out riding in the city, dispute about the location, the Archbishop being adamant the convent should be near his palace.[162]

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[160] For a fascinating account of just how revolutionary some of the Carmelite propositions for reform were, see Isabelle Poutrin, 'Ascèse et désert en Espagne (1560-1600): autour de la réforme Carmélitaine' in *Mélanges de la Casa de Velazquez*, no. 25 (1989): 145-160.

[161] [Because it is the grace of divine valour to overcome with lilies, triumph with roses, restraining elephantine demons with dove-like women. There are no words with which to ponder the majesty of the celebration of the Mass in the convents, the music, the smells, the grandeur of the temples, cleanliness of the altars and the assiduity with which their services are attended] Vetancurt (1698) unpaginated.

[162] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)Bk. I Ch. 3. For a review of Archbishop Pérez de la Serna's role in the foundation of San José see Manuel Ramos Medina, *Imagen de santidad en un mundo profano* (México: UIA, 1990) See Valerie Fraser, 'Architecture and Ambition: The Case of the Jesuits in the Viceroyalty of Peru' in *History Workshop Journal*, no. 34 (1992): 18-32 for an account of how important the location of ecclesiastical buildings in the cities of the colonies was.

The place occupied by the cloister in the imaginary of the city can also be gauged in part through the motives given by the male authors as determining the foundation. Both Avendaño and Méndez concentrate on the divinely ordained nature of the foundation, producing accounts of Sta. Teresa's desire for such an event. In his history, Avendaño documents the devotion to Sta. Teresa shown by eminent devout people before the foundation as being pious portents of San José's success. These devotees include the hermit Gregorio López, acclaimed as the holy man of the Indies and revered as a saint.[163] The political importance of Sta. Teresa was equally evident in the intrigues surrounding the foundation of this first convent of her order in Mexico City. The years 1600-06 were some of the most active of the Counter-Reformation. They were also a period in which Sta. Teresa's fame grew. By 1604, Lima had its Carmelite convent and in Mexico potential patrons and founding mothers were numerous. Inés de la Cruz and Mariana de la Encarnación, the nuns who eventually founded San José, mention various other attempts which disrupted their own during these years. These involved nuns from other New Spanish convents, *beatas* from Spain, and female members of élite Mexican families.[164] It is interesting to note that many of the complaints about these would-be Carmelites, who were professed nuns in the convent of Jesús María, accuse them of being *noveleras* (modish) and of abandoning the Conceptionist rule for a fashionable whim. Mariana de la Encarnación clearly wants to avoid the ecclesiastical scandal that such accusations could lead to and in her account of the foundation emphasises the fact that the Carmelite confessors first concentrated on making the nuns who were intent on reform keep their Conceptionist rule perfectly.[165] This caution was necessary principally because devotion for Sta. Teresa did not enjoy any official ecclesiastical backing at the time. The arrival of Archbishop Pérez de la Serna in 1612, who had read Sta. Teresa's writings on his Atlantic crossing and believed that he had been saved from shipwreck by her intervention, signalled precisely this. San José was to be the Archbishop's magnificent *ex voto*.[166]

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[163] *Crónica* f1 AHCSJ.

[164] See Inés de la Cruz *Fundación*, Mariana de la Encarnación *Fundación* and Avendaño *Crónica* AHCSJ.

[165] Inés de la Cruz, *Fundación* 63 This argument is reproduced by Méndez with a long comment on how the only perfection possible is the perfect observance of the rule professed, thus attempting to avoid any insinuation that the nuns consider the Conceptionist rule as in some way less holy than the Carmelite one. Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 46v AHCSJ.

[166] Mariana de la Encarnación *Fundación* 75 AHCSJ.

The identification of the Archbishop as the special patron of the convent would certainly have conferred great importance on it, the measure of which is perhaps best given by pointing out that in 1618, the year of Sta. Teresa's canonisation, Pérez de la Serna named her patron saint of Mexico City. He had already made sure the convent had as its chaplain Francisco Lossa, possibly the most famous saintly man in the Indies at the time because of his past friendship with the dead Gregorio López. The Archbishop also ensured that López's bones were held in the convent, thus making it the possessor of very powerful of relics.[167] San José and its inhabitants came in some measure to symbolise the spiritual aspirations that the Church had for the entire city, and were thus the exemplary sign of orthodoxy.

The 'official' nature of all the printed chronicles, the fact that their representation of the convent's place in civic society could not permit any disparagement, means that the representation of ceremonies connected to the foundation of San José confirm baroque orthodoxies about the function of public display in ratifying institutional power and 'world-order'. The ceremonies of the taking of legal possession of convent buildings and the profession of nuns are perhaps the best example of this. The altars erected in the streets by different convents and religious brotherhoods for the procession of the inauguration of San José were so magnificent that a description of them was commissioned. A contemporary manuscript copy of this text exists in the archive of San José, and Méndez quotes from it in his account, making clear how important a part of the institution's history such displays were considered to be.

The interest of this manuscript as an account of the foundation ceremony of San José lies principally in its hermeneutic explanation of the images it describes.[168] It thus allows an examination of the relation of the image to moments of political, social, and religious display and instruction. The learned and official nature of the document is

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[167] The relics of Gregorio López were paraded through the streets during the ceremony of the taking of legal possession of the new convent. See Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 22. The continued ecclesiastical and political favour shown towards San José should be noted. As Abbess, Bernarda de San Juan enjoyed the patronage of Archbishop Palafox. Cf. Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 72 AHCSJ. On the political and cultural value of the Carmelite Order see Olwen Hufton, "It may be that the order was regarded as intrinsically Spanish, the product of a proven saintly mystic [...] To put a daughter in the Carmelites was then a political statement, one of allegiance to a country and its cultural creations." Hufton (1995)370.

[168] Francisco Bramón y Vallejo, *Relación de las Solemnísimas fiestas que a la dedicación y fundación del convento de San José de Carmelitas Descalzas se hicieron en esta muy noble y muy leal ciudad de México* AHCSJ. This account, hereafter *Relación*, is part of the manuscript chronicle of San José AHCSJ and a printed version may be found in Manuel Ramos Medina (1990) Appendix 2, 192-238. All quotations are from this printed version.

apparent from the ingenuity of the introductory paragraph. Here Europe is described as having travelled to the Indies to adorn them, an adroit rhetorical inversion of the more usual trope. In this commercial negotiation, Mexico has traded its wealth for the beauties of Europe, but instead of exchange and difference being apparent, this economy functions along the lines of a rhetoric of substitution, emphasising similarity and consonance. Interestingly, the passage also acknowledges that 'difference' is more usually proper to the New World, underlining the great *spiritual* power needed to achieve 'sameness':

> *Pintó el más lucido adorno de las calles (en distrito largo) donde se porfía se desafió lo rico con lo discreto, lo galante con lo vistoso, la bizarría y lo pomposo con toda la majestad posible. Para este ostentativo aparato Milán remitió brocados; Toledo, esmero y damascos; Granada tejió terciopelos, la India bordados, Italia envió pinceles, Roma dió láminas y México, todo a truco de su oro, lo cambió gustosa para lucir feliz, no tanto sus haberes, cuanto la bizarría de la correspondencia más que ingeniosa, que mostraba para lucirlo todo en grata veneración de todo día.*[169]

The greatest part of the text is devoted to descriptive passages of each of the altars set up by important noble families, confraternities, convents, and monasteries along the route taken by the foundation procession. The illumination of the streets, the fireworks, and the decoration of public space with carpets and flowers is all recorded and acknowledged as instances of the particular benevolence of a devout patron or group of patrons.

The physical presence of the images that are paraded is shown vividly in the description of the life-size images of *Santiago* (St. James), the saint of the crusades against the Moors who had been adopted by the *conquistadores* as their patron. His image is described as breaking through crowds, which would certainly have been racially heterogeneous, in another affirmation of the foundation as an event erasing difference, *Santiago* incarnating the victory of the most orthodox of Spanish *reconquista* values - values to be guarded in the new convent:

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[169] [The brightest adornment of the streets (their length and breath) was painted. One could insist that the rich had been challenged by the discrete, the gallant by the seemly, the spirited and pompous by the utmost majesty. For this ostentatious pomp Milan sent brocade, Toledo artistry and damask, Granada wove velvet, India embroideries, Italy sent painting brushes, Rome gave canvasses and Mexico, by grace of her gold, transformed it all willingly in order to show happily not so much her possession, rather the spiritedness of correspondence and exchange which was more than simply ingenious and which she exhibited to display it all in pleasing veneration throughout the day] *Relación* Ramos Medina (1990)193-4. Emphasis mine.

Iban rompiendo por la apiñada multitud de toda gente que en las calles con apretado tropel se vió (en dos andas) dos imágenes de talla (de toda estatura de hombre) del patrón de las Españas, a caballo, el brazo derecho levantado como esgrimiendo luciente estoque para obligar al pueblo diese lugar a que pasasen, llevaban cuatro estandartes de carmesí.[170]

Writing Strategies

The most important of the writings by women about San José are the two versions of the foundation of the convent by the founding mothers, Inés de la Cruz and Mariana de la Encarnación. There are also autobiographical *vidas* as well as accounts of the lives of virtuous nuns. Most of these are of the founding mother Inés de la Cruz, or of her protégé, Bernarda de San Juan and are written by different nuns, although Margarita de San Bernardo emerges as the chief author. The style in all these writings is intimate and personal, something particularly notable in the way personages representing enormous political power are written about. Both founding nuns, for example, are careful to reproduce the Archbishop Pérez de la Serna's speech; usually the jokes he makes at their expense. The relation to Juan de Rivera, the patron, is described in terms of the techniques of persuasion the nuns have to use on him. In a

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[170] [Thrusting through the tumultuous crowd of all kinds of people who thronged the streets could be seen two sculpted life size images (on two litters) of the Patron of Spain, on horseback, the left arm lifted as if drawing a shining sword in order to oblige the people to let them pass, they carried four scarlet standards] *Relación* Ramos Medina (1990)197. This rather elaborate 'reading' of the deployment of Santiago is encouraged by the text itself which describes how such images should be interpreted. The importance of the intellectual explanation of such visual displays in the period is discussed at length in Maravall (1990) (especially section IV, 'Los Recursos de Acción Psicológica sobre la sociedad Barroca.') and Mexican examples come easily to mind; the texts of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Sigüenza y Góngora explaining the respective triumphal arches they designed for the entry of a viceroy, or that of Cervantes y Salazar for the funerary ceremonies on the death of Charles V. It is interesting to note that the altar paid for by the *Oidor de la Real Audiencia* Juan Quezada Figueroa, which is devoted to Sta. Teresa, fits Maravall's analysis of ingenious Baroque display serving to stage-manage fairly transparent political meanings. The altar has an accompanying 'spectacle' consisting of a forest populated with animals and *Indios* who prostrate themselves as the procession goes by. *Relación* Ramos Medina (1990)226-31. For an account which questions monolithic theories of the power of the image in the period, such as those of Maravall and concentrates on the Colonial context, see William B. Taylor, 'Santiago's Horse: Christianity and Colonial Indian Resistance in the Heartland of New Spain' in *Violence, Resistance and Survival in the Americas: Native Americans and the Legacy of Conquest*, William B. Taylor & Franklin G. Pease Eds. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1993)153-189. From this point of view of 'spectacle' it is worth pointing out that a poetry competition formed part of the foundation ceremony of the nuns of Sta. Catalina: *Se publicó un certamen literario, convocando a los poetas, para que con dulces cadencias entrasen a la parte de la celebridad en la dedicación, cuyos poemas se leyeron después de el Novenario en dicha Iglesia y se dieron crecidos premios a los que concurrieron con sus poesías.*[A poetry competition was held, calling poets to, in sweets songs, sing the fame of the dedication. The poems were read after the prayers in the said church and magnificent prizes were given to those who entered their verses.] Peña (1728)54.

similarly light and mischievous vein, their dealings with the *Oidor* Quezada are described as complicated because of his grandfather's notorious misdemeanours as a *devoto* of a certain nun and the *Oidor* 's wife's natural suspicion that he may have inherited such proclivities.

Parayso Occidental by Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora is the only printed chronicle and is prefaced by the usual baroque panoply of dedications, approvals, and prologues. Within the history of the convent of Jesús María, Sigüenza y Góngora includes the foundation of San José by virtuous nuns from the royal convent, centring his account on the *vidas* of the two founding Carmelite mothers, but the foundation of San José is clearly a subsidiary to the main narrative dealing with Jesús María. Nevertheless, the entire book is built up around the conflict engendered by reforming nuns who meet opposition from a convent community described as at best religiously complacent and at worst dissolute. This reforming zeal usually takes the form of a desire for a more contemplative religious lifestyle; one best incarnated by the Carmelite order. Sigüenza y Góngora cannot 'betray' his subject, Jesús María, however and must thus phrase his criticism carefully. Not surprisingly, he leaves out the most damaging of Inés de la Cruz's descriptions of the difficulties she encountered when campaigning for the foundation when he quotes from her account. What sensitive material he does reproduce, he is careful to invalidate by a sophisticated chronological ordering which allows him the narrative effect while being able to claim that the abuses no longer exist.[171] It is apparent in the apologetic exordium to the work, where the glories of Aztec history are recalled, that Sigüenza y Góngora's chronicle was intended for a general public, including a non-Mexican readership. The founding of a female enclosed convent is clearly an event of great political moment, and Sigüenza y Góngora's account is transparent in its refutation of any criticism and in its defence of such a foundation taking place in the New World.

The second compendium chronicle, *Historia de la Fundación* by Juan Bautista Méndez, exists only in manuscript. The manuscript has been annotated by a contemporary hand, most probably that of Mariana de la Encarnación, and also censored. There are two further manuscripts with the same title in the San José Archive. One, however, is truncated and seems to be a later version than the other as it

[171] Cf. Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)168/198.

does not include the censored paragraphs, although it contains some important annotations by Méndez himself, which are of interest. The more complete version is made up of two books. The first is fifty four chapters long and recounts the foundation through the *vida* of the founding mother, Inés de la Cruz. It also contains the *vida* of Francisco Lossa, the first chaplain of the convent and a reputed saint. The second book is shorter (thirty chapters) and is made up of the *vidas* of illustrious nuns. The manuscript has no conclusive ending.

The structure used by Méndez leads to a mingling of hagiographic narrative with set pieces describing ceremonies. This mixture is accounted for by the fact that Méndez wishes to present the chronicle as chronologically exact and encompassing. Thus, the text is punctuated by sections detailing the election of new prioresses, the death, and the profession of nuns. This type of material, which is more usually found in separate convent books, is used to advance the narrative of the 'history' of the convent. The first book is where this device is carried off with most flair and complexity. In it, Méndez frames the events which led to the foundation through the *vidas* of Inés de la Cruz and Francisco Lossa. In the second book, there are no more 'events' in the sense of those in the first, and so the narrative breaks up into a roll-call of the nuns in the convent and an account of their virtues in the form of schematic *vidas*. Méndez is intent on cataloguing the *vida* of each nun in the convent, regardless of spiritual notoriety and this leads to such anomalies in the text as there being no account of the other founding mother, Mariana de la Encarnación, simply because she is still alive at the time when the chronicle is being compiled.

Unlike Sigüenza y Góngora, Méndez does not have any such obvious reason to censor the original material he uses and he even reproduces texts with which he is clearly uncomfortable and which he feels bound to commentate on at length. There are various points in his chronicle where Méndez's observations are clearly directed at a religious rather than lay audience, and this may account for his taking the risk of reproducing material which could be unfavourably interpreted by a lay public. Mariana de la Encarnación's marginal notes to this manuscript would suggest that it was circulated within the convent as a book from which the nuns could learn their own history. However, Méndez's rather liberal approach to the inclusion of material was itself rejected at some point. This meant sections of his chronicle were censored. One such long paragraph remains legible and contains the story of a nun and her *devoto*. Other

irrecoverable censored sections are from the *vida* of Francisco Lossa and would seem to concern his alleged 'weakness' in city society. As this has been characterised as full of lewd people in previous passages, it seems probable that his weakness is of the concupiscent variety censored in the *devoto* anecdote.

The last compendium chronicle by Nicolás de Avendaño consists only of about ten folio manuscript pages. It was clearly meant to be a full history of the foundation of San José, but the manuscript is truncated, covering only the providential background to the foundation and the first part of the *vida* of Inés de la Cruz. Avendaño is close to Méndez in his treatment of the original texts, but reproduces very little of them, using them more as prolegomena for his own spiritual opinions and referring the reader through marginal notes to Inés de la Cruz's text for further information. He clearly expects this to be to hand, and so one may conjecture that his book was meant for a convent audience as Inés's account was never published, although manuscript copies were made.

Reforming the Convent Community

Reform and the Family

However much the dissolution of affective ties to the world - which were overwhelmingly represented in terms of the family in the period - were stressed by religious orthodoxy, the chronicles make apparent that such a perfect situation was not to be found either in Jesús María or in San José. Moreover, the political and economic expediency of the existence of these ties for religious institutions in the period is patent.

The importance of family groups within the convent is confirmed by the utter disruption caused by a certain archbishop's breaking up of a family circle in Jesús María. His intervention results in three of the ten founding nuns being returned to their mother convent of La Concepción. Mariana de la Encarnación's account that the nuns took with them their dowries may partially explain the angry reaction of the community, but her most interesting comments are about how the crisis confirmed political and, crucially, family allegiances within the convent:

> *Estas sobredichas religiosas dejaron en el convento hermanas, sobrinas y primas y muchas amigas. Estas, sentidas de que no habían defendido a las que*

salieron, quedaron en gran división enemistades y bandos, aunque los prelados y preladas hacían las diligencias debidas.[172]

Mariana de la Encarnación herself becomes a victim of these allegiances when she contemplates the idea of reform, a wish that is immediately identified as a threat to the community. The convent is full of her sisters and other relatives, as well as childhood friends, she having been educated there as a girl before professing. None of these people can understand her desire for change:

Mis hermanas y deudas, que eran hartas, me ayudaban a tribular diciéndome qué me metía en aquellas novedades, que Dios me había traído desde pequeña a aquella religión donde era amada de todas y dádome talentos para vivir en su compañía con gusto.[173]

Even Inés de la Cruz, who since she has none of the family connections of the other nuns is consistently characterised as an outsider in Jesús María, is not exempt from family commitments and certainly not above invoking family solidarity herself in order to further the cause of reform. Thus, she convinces her brother to give a large sum of money to the convent, then manages to make him provide the dowry for a penniless nun and on his deathbed gets him to change his will in favour of the convent, promising it will be his 'indulgence', diminishing his time in purgatory.[174]

Nevertheless, the solidarity of the family and community has very fluid significations and thus Inés's later refusal to accede to the Archbishop Pérez de la Serna's request that the founding nuns for San José be chosen from each convent in Mexico city can be interpreted not only as an attempt to assure spiritual coherence,

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[172] [The said nuns left sisters, nieces, cousins and many friends in the convent. These, resentful of the fact that those expelled had not been defended, created divisions, enemy groups and factions, even though priests and prioresses did everything the situation called for] Mariana de la Encarnación *Fundación* 73 AHCSJ.

[173] [My sisters and relatives, of whom there were many, increased my hesitation, saying to me what was I doing getting involved in such novelties when God had placed me since childhood in this religious order where I was loved by all and had given me the ability to live contented in their company] Mariana de la Encarnación *Fundación* 73 AHCSJ.

[174] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 20v/50 and Mariana de la Encarnación *Fundación* 65 AHCSJ. The tension that could arise from two such contradictory imperatives about convent relations with the world are best exemplified by the visits paid by the Vicereign to San José once it has been founded. Her presence signals official favour but breaks the cloister. Méndez and the founding mothers solve this by describing her as taking part in convent life and not interrupting it; a sort of honorary nun. Cf. Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 30 AHCSJ. See also that Inés de la Cruz is prepared to concede to the wishes of the potential patron of San José, Luis de Rivera, acknowledging the strength of family presences within the cloister. She allows him to name the female relatives he has in Jesús María as co-founding mothers with her. Clearly, the relation between patronage and the enhancement of family honour was too strong to be challenged.

(she argues that taking nuns from different religious orders will make it difficult to impose a new order) but also political stability, by assuring that a completely new system of solidarity and community identity (of her design) can be set in place.[175]

The image of the convent community which emerges from a reading of these chronicles is by no means a coherent one; at points emphasising unity, at others dispersion. This is most easily explained by the plot of the chronicle narratives which require on the one hand the exaltation of a virtuous reforming individual, and achieve their effect by setting this individual in contrast with a recalcitrant community, and on the other require that this virtuous individual be seen to be the example of a community whose own perfection makes it heavenly:

> *... si puede haber cielo en la tierra, lo es estos rincones, donde el Señor viene a recrear y aliviar las ofensas que le hacen con sus pecados esos ingratos del mundo.*[176]

Both of these narrative imperatives must be understood as connected to the important contemporary debate on the virtue of religious institutions in New Spain. In this respect, it is interesting to note the new and adapted Conceptionist rule which was published by the archbishop Francisco Manso y Zúñiga in 1635.[177] The convent of Jesús María would have been subject to this. The pamphlet begins by hinting that Manso's political and spiritual power is not all that he would wish it to be, the nuns

> *..están poco adaptadas y acomodadas al estilo de nuestro gobierno y jurisdicción Arzobispal y Ordinaria..*[178]

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[175] Inés de la Cruz *Fundación* 46 AHCSJ.

[176] [If there can be heaven on earth, it is in these nooks where the Lord comes to relax and soothe the injuries which the sins of the ungrateful of this world do Him] Inés de la Cruz *Fundación* 37 AHCSJ. Méndez tries to resolve the contradictions involved in the representation of reform by adducing that God allows the virtuous nuns to be punished and mistreated by their equally virtuous sister nuns in order to test them, giving biblical precedents for this kind of divine intervention. In his *vida* of Inés de la Madre de Dios, in order to exalt her endurance Méndez recounts how the nuns gossip about her during recreation, thus committing one of the greatest abuses that their founding mother Inés de la Cruz complained of in Jesús María, and from which the 'reformed' San José was supposedly free. Clearly, Méndez's 'solution' of divine intervention also provides an explanation and alibi for laxness. Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 17v-18, and 101v AHCSJ.

[177] *Regla y Ordenaciones* (México, 1635) The text begins with the *Vida* of the founding Mother, designed to be an example for the communities that have been led astray from their original virtue and again emphasising the close relation between the concepts of tradition, didacticism and orthodoxy.

[178] [They are ill adapted and fit for our style of government and the rule of the Secular Archbishop] *Regla y Ordenaciones* (México, 1635) unpaginated.

It goes on to specify necessary reforms in sections covering dress, the method of electing an abbess, the distribution of the community's economic possessions and of the income from work carried out for the benefit of the entire community rather than individual nuns, the regulation of entries and exits from the cloister, the keeping of the vow of silence, and the preservation of a 'peaceful' atmosphere within the community. These areas designated as a problem are startlingly similar to the features of convent life in Jesús María which the would-be Carmelites choose to complain about in their justifications for breaking away. The issue of reform and laxness must not be seen as confined to these two convents or to the Conceptionist and Carmelite orders in particular however, but as part of a larger social and religious crisis which was to lead to extended ecclesiastical reform in the eighteenth century. Asunción Lavrin's summary of the main causes of this crisis make apparent how deep-rooted the problems revealed in this particular instance were.[179]

The fact that the case for reform and spiritual purity was usually structured around a defence of a nun's contemplative and ascetic desires as contrasted with the mundanity of the community she found herself in, often lead to a reproduction of misogynist *topoi* on female sociability by the author, regardless of the latter's sex. Thus in the *vidas*, without exception, the convent figures as a space from which to escape the veniality the aspiring nuns are condemned to by virtue of their female sex if they remain in the world. Consequently, spiritual weakness in the convent is signalled precisely by a reversion to these worldly values. Hence the outcry against ornamented habits, servants, and the presence of lay persons in the cloister.[180]

At points, it is necessary for the virtuous nun to 'retire' even within the convent enclosure. This is Marina de la Cruz's situation, where her virtue is assured by her living in a tower, away from the community and receiving only the visits of chosen nuns.[181] The *vida* of Beatríz de Santiago who had spent most of her life in the court before

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[179] Lavrin (1965). Cf. Anthony D. Wright; "The integration of religious and civil life was predictably clearest in the case of female convents in Mexico where, by the eighteenth century, nuns retained personal incomes, and convents employed lay agents to manage their property and made loans at interest; a return to truly communal living was resisted." in *The Counter-Reformation, Catholic Europe and the Non-Christian World* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1982)142,

[180] For an orthodox opinion on the pernicious effects of the world for the nun see Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 62 AHCSJ ... *porque más fácil es hacer un milagro que remediar el daño que al religioso de la comunicación secular [sic] puede provenir.* [because it is easier to do a miracle than to salvage the damage which a monk or nun can suffer from communication with lay persons.].

[181] Cf. the hermit's cells built in the gardens of San José which the nuns were obliged to retire to as part of the daily activity.

professing, is presented as the ultimate example of a perfect withdrawal from human society. In the cloister she effectively disappears:

> *Su silencio y retiro era tan grande que ocasionaba a que apenas se acordasen que estaba en el convento, cuando a él venía de las cortesías y cumplimientos de palacio ...*[182]

One of the Inés de la Cruz's most serious accusations of laxness made against Jesús María, in Sigüenza y Góngora's account, is precisely the recreation of courtly activities within the cloister through the staging of plays. Her choice of the theatre is carefully made, for in the theatrical something of the very essence of the cloister is destroyed as the nuns themselves become actresses; a visual promiscuity which is also, unavoidably, a sexual one:

> *Harto sentía la poca reverencia que se tenía delante del santísimo sacramento y que el coro de las religiosas se hiciese ventana publica de seculares ...*[183]

It becomes clear that the communal 'paradise' of rational flowers envisaged by Sigüenza y Góngora in his prologue to *Parayso Occidental* will simply not function as an image of the convent if one particular nun's virtue is to be exemplified. For this exaltation of an individual, it is necessary for the cloister to replicate the sins of the world within its walls, producing a convent community fractured in many ways, the most important clearly being the division between the saved and the damned.[184] Thus, Sigüenza y Góngora justifies his account of the divisions in Jesús María precisely because it serves a didactic purpose:

> *... se valió algunas veces el demonio para querer alborotar el convento Real de JESÚS MARÍA con discordias y pesadumbres. Referiré algunos sucesos para*

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[182] [Her silence and retirement was such that often they forgot she was in the convent, even though she came to the cloister from the courtliness and gallantry of the palace.] Margarita de San Bernardo, *Escritos* 106 Cf. How the 'spectacular' function of the court woman - presents a generalised eroticism which is directly opposed to the silent invisibility of the nun. In Grundy & Wiseman Eds. (1992)169.

[183] [She was very sorry about the little reverence shown before the Holy sacrament and the fact that the nuns' choir should have been made into a public window for lay people (to look in)] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)145.

[184] Perhaps the most extreme example of this convent evil is to be found in the misfortunes encountered by Ana de la Concepción who receives death-threats from lay enemies who have as accomplices nuns in Jesús María. See Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)159.

que así las Superioras, como las súbditas, reconozcan de donde se pueden originar los chismes que las inquietan.[185]

The virtuous nun's visions and *portentos* (premonitions) often work to confirm this kind of division of the community. The most striking example is perhaps Inés de la Cruz's vision of the nuns singing hours in the choir ascending to heaven. She recounts the vision to the community, and her reaction to the anxiety her account causes those nuns absent from the religious ceremony and thus not included in the vision, is to laugh, exhorting them to keep the rules of the order in future.[186] In a similar episode she is visited in her sleep by a nun from Jesús María who is in purgatory

... por haber sido causa de que se introdujese traer pulseras de azabache las religiosas para hermosear las manos.[187]

and who asks that such a custom be prohibited so she may be released from suffering. Thus, and in many similar episodes, reform is divinely sanctioned in the chronicles.

Reform and Race

The convent 'family' of the chronicles is not a united one and is ultimately represented as sharing the problems of integration and kinship displayed by its worldly analogue. In the New Spanish context these issues are significantly connected to matters of race and social class. Thus, the representation of reform in the chronicles, with its necessary division of the community into pious and less pious, or good and evil, reveals the preoccupation of the authors to associate racial and class values with moral ones. The chronicles present a discourse about religious orthodoxy by relating the New Spanish case to European archetypes and norms. In so doing, this discourse becomes one about racial and cultural orthodoxy - the enclosed nun coming to symbolise the honour of the Spanish race in the Indies.[188]

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[185] [Sometimes the devil used discords and disagreements to disturb the Royal convent of Jesús María. I will recount some episodes so that the nuns in authority as well as those subject to them can recognise how the gossiping that disturbs them sometimes originates] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)162v.

[186] Margarita de San Bernardo *Escritos* 143 AHCSJ.

[187] [For having been the cause of the fashion for wearing ebony bracelets by the nuns in order to beautify their hands] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)168.

[188] I use honour here in the global sense ascribed to it by José Antonio Maravall (1990) when he discusses *honor* as being the defining characteristic of Spanish preoccupation's with sexual, cultural, political and social orthodoxy in the period.

The establishment of the female enclosed convents however, took place long after any 'innocence' attributable to the first encounter of races in the discovery of the New World had been irreparably compromised. The nuns in New Spanish convents were of Spanish race, as was stipulated by their entry requirements, but already there was a division between those born in Spain and those born in the Indies, between *criollas* and *gachupinas*. This division begins to be expressed in increasingly biological terms in contemporary sources and I will reproduce this terminology, but it should be kept in mind that the difference between *gachupinas* and *criollas* in the convents would have been cultural/ethnic rather than strictly racial. Although the desire to present the convent as a space where virtue is the only quality required for orthodoxy is very strong, in *Parayso Occidental*, for example, the only way to do this seems to be precisely by articulating racial differences. Thus, in an impressive conflation of cultural and religious associations, God wakes a black serving woman in Jesús María so that she may prevent a Jewish woman who has been left in the convent from damaging a holy image.[189]

Considering the heterogeneous population that existed in the New Spanish convent, it is not surprising that the reformatory stance taken by many of the virtuous nuns in the chronicles should be interpreted not merely in terms of religious orthodoxy but also of social and racial advancement:

> *No faltó quien respirando cólera y sentimiento le propusiese a la Abadesa ser indecentísimo el que una lega (así la nombraban por no haberle permitido el ejercicio del coro) tuviese avilantez de corregir tan imprudentemente a las que, si estuvieran en el siglo, quizás no la recibieran en su familia; ni aún por criada.*[190]

Marina de la Cruz, despite her Spanish birth, is clearly considered inferior by her sister nuns, who also make apparent the internal social hierarchy of the convent by mentioning her status as a *lega* - a nun who did not participate in the religious ceremonies connected to the choir and who carried out the menial tasks in the convent. In a similar identification and differentiation, the nuns of Jesús María see Inés de la Cruz's desires for reform as being intimately connected to her status as a *gachupina* in

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[189] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)176.

[190] [Not surprisingly, those resentful and vindictive suggested to the Abbess that it was completely indecent that a servant nun (they called her that because she was not permitted to pray in the choir) should be so bold and so imprudent as to correct those who, if they were in the world would not perhaps receive her into their family, not even as a skivvy.] Sigüenza y Góngora (1683)75.

a convent overwhelmingly made up of *criollas.* Thus, Mariana de la Encarnación presents the warning she received from her family and friends in the convent as being couched in these terms:

> *Mis hermanas y deudas que eran hartas [...] diciéndome [...] que dejase a la madre Inés de la Cruz, que era propiedad de gachupinas ser noveleras, amigas de hacer ruido, ambiciosas por ganar fama, y que hiciese caso de ellas....*[191]

Ana de San Miguel, who is Abbess at the time of the break-away, goes further and presents a global interpretation of the privileges enjoyed by *gachupines* in New Spain. Clearly, what is at stake may nominally be religious orthodoxy, figured as greater austerity, but there are a host of political interests, figured as racial purity, also involved. Ana de San Miguel's comments are made during the period when Archbishop Pérez de la Serna became the patron of the would-be Carmelites and refer to the power this *gachupín* Archbishop had and his decision to bestow his favour on his fellow Spaniards born in the Iberian peninsula:

> *... paréceme se van componiendo ya las cosas de la fundación de carmelitas. Esta gente de España tiene su estrella en las Indias. Inés de la Cruz es gachupina y ha de salir con la fundación. No hay sino retirarnos nosotras y allá se lo haya ella y las que la siguieren...*[192]

The Abbess' identification of the political rather than spiritual reasons for Pérez de la Serna's behaviour is confirmed by the comment he makes to the founding mothers when they try to refuse the grand entrance ceremony he has planned for their inauguration of the convent buildings:

> *Ya comienzan mis carmelitas a hacer hipocresías, váyanse ahora a descansar que tiempo les queda para hacer muchas finezas...*[193]

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[191] [My sisters and relatives, of whom there were many, said to me I should leave mother Inés de la Cruz, that it was characteristic of *gachupinas* to be lovers of novelty, friends of scandal and ambitious to gain fame, and that I should (instead) pay attention to them] *Fundación* 73 AHCSJ.

[192] [It seems that things are working out for the foundation of the Carmelite convent. These Spanish people have their lucky star in the Indies. Inés de la Cruz is *gachupina* and will get her foundation. There's nothing for us to do but retreat and leave it to her and those who follow her] Mariana de la Encarnación *Fundación* 70 AHCSJ.

[193] [My Carmelites already begin to behave hypocritically - go now and rest, you'll have plenty of time in which to behave preciously] Mariana de la Encarnación *Fundación* 92 AHCSJ.

He classifies their being disingenuous as hypocrisy, saying that they will have time enough in which to display their orthodoxy as Carmelites and all the austerity this implies, whereas in his opinion, the politics of the occasion is the pre-eminent concern, not spiritual etiquette.

The enormously complex political and racial situation these comments point to is further revealed as being of central importance, both in the cloister and outside it, by Méndez's extended aside on racial politics, meant as an explanation of the remarks made by Ana de San Miguel quoted above about the political power the *gachupines* enjoyed in the colony:

> *(Entre aquí un paréntesis advirtiendo aquí las razones de esta Madre Abadesa [Ana de San Miguel] que sin duda las dijo o apasionada o sin alguna advertencia; porque no es de persona de talento decir que la gente de España tiene en las Indias su estrella. Su estrella tiene en las Indias, o en España, quien en una y otra parte obra religiosa y ajustadamente. Y el abuso y división entre los de una y otra nación quisiera yo ver fuera de las Religiones sin que se andubiesere parando en si es criollo o cachupin [sic]. Sea lo que fuere. Conózcanse de cada uno los méritos y según su bueno o malo proceder désele el premio o prémiesele con el castigo. Que no es justo que el pobrecito que viene de España, pierda y lo miren con ojeriza sólo por ser de la otra parte del charco si por sí merece, que le hagan bien. Y en la Religión es ésta una polilla que cunde mucho con grande estrago de las almas y es una división con que el demonio ha ganado mucho. Y contención de Indias o España, de esta o la otra tierra es cumplirse al pie de la letra lo que la mística Doctora de la Iglesia Nuestra Madre Sta. Teresa de Jesús dice: que es pelear sobre si esta o aquella tierra son buenas para adobes o para tapias. Dejemos tierras, con todo religioso y religiosa hablo, los que hemos profesado el hollar y poner debajo de nuestros pies al mundo y sus vanidades y pues así es, ¿qué nos importa el que esta o la otra tierra sean malas? No lo seamos nosotros que lo demás poco importa, y los que han renunciado las honras no hagan punto de honor el haber nacido en buena o mala tierra. Y acabemos de desengañar que lo mejor es procurar con perfección caminar a nuestra verdadera patria que es el cielo y darle infinitas gracias a Dios Nuestro Señor porque nos trajo a tierra donde conociésemos y confesásemos su santo nombre). Este ha sido el paréntesis. Volvamos a la historia...*[194]

[194] [(Here I'll open a parenthesis explaining the reasons which led this Abbess to say, in an undoubtedly passionate and unguarded way, that people from Spain find their lucky star in the Indies. Whoever behaves in a godly and religious way will find their lucky star either in the Indies or in Spain. I would like to see the insults and discord between those of one nation and the other banished from [the realm of the] religious orders where no notice should be taken if one is *criollo* or *cachupin*. Whatever one is. The merits of each person should be judged and according to their good or bad behaviour they should be given a reward or rewarded a punishment. It's unjust that the poor little man that comes from Spain loses out and is born a grudge only because he comes from across the water. If he deserves it, he should be treated well. And in religious orders this [kind of prejudice] is a worm that eats away at many souls and is a cause of fracture. [Through it] the devil has gained strongly. Arguing about the Indies and Spain, setting one country above the other, is to fulfil to the letter what the mystical doctor of the church Sta. Teresa says: that it's like arguing over whether one soil or another is better for building with bricks or with tiles. Let's try and forget countries - I speak to every monk and nun, those of us who have promised to crush and stamp

Méndez's opinions are an elaboration of a profoundly democratic Christian argument: that all people, no matter where born, are equals spiritually. Crucially, he does not argue for their equality outside the cloister. The existence of *buena o mala tierra* is not questioned, difference in these matters clearly being admitted, but the convent thus becomes the utopic homeland - *nuestra verdadera patria* - where this difference is dissolved in the same way as other worldly attachments.

At this point, it becomes clear that the belief in the differences existing between *gachupines* and *criollos* held great currency and that it was used throughout the arguments about laxness and reformation in the convents to support opinions about the spiritual inferiority of *criollo* nuns. The stories of the other contenders for the foundation of San José only serves to confirm this. Inés de la Cruz describes how the patron Rivera sends to Spain for nuns, as he does not want to found the convent with Mexican women. She writes to him explaining she herself was born in Spain, in order to secure his support. Although Inés does not explicitly mention the racial values at issue in the foundation attempt, Mariana de la Encarnación's account of the prelate's words make these transparent:

> *Que mientras que él fuese prelado no consentiría fundasen convento de religión que profesa tanta perfección criollas regalonas y chocolateras. Que traeríamos tres o cuatro criadas cada una que nos sirviesen. Y a este tono otras muchas cosas que tuviera mucha razón el santo de decirlas si fuera yo la que fundaba y no una tan gran santa como la madre Inés de la Cruz a cuya sombra venía una tan miserable como yo.*[195]

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beneath our feet the world and its vanities. And if this is true, what does it matter to us that this or that country is bad? Let us not be bad ourselves. Nothing else matters much and those who have renounced honours should not make it a point of honour to have been born in a good or bad country. Let's stop deceiving ourselves and acknowledge that the best thing is to seek to walk in perfection towards our true nation which is heaven and to give infinite thanks to God for bringing us to a land where we know and worship His holy name) This has been the parenthesis, now let's return to the history ...] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 11 AHCSJ Méndez is referring to Sta. Teresa's comment; *sobre cuál es la mijor tierra, que no es otra cosa sino debatir si será para lodo bueno u para adobes* [about which is the better soil, an argument which is nothing other than to debate what soil is better for bricks or for mud walls] *Camino de la Perfección*, in *Obras Completas*, Efrén de la Madre de Dios & Otger Steggink Eds.(1967). Sta. Teresa also insists that nuns who use these considerations to divide a convent should be punished harshly. Apparently, the convent of La Encarnación, from which Sta. Teresa initiated her reform, reproduced the social and economic hierarchies of the day with nuns calling each other by their family names and sometimes addressing each other as *Doña*, thus reinforcing divisions of status within the community. Cf Jodi Bilinkoff, *The Avila of Sta. Teresa: Religious Reform in a Sixteenth Century City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

[195] [That while he was prelate he would not consent to the foundation of a convent that professes to be so perfect by spoilt, chocolate-guzzling *criollas*. That we (the *criollas*) would bring three or four servants each to serve us. He said this and many other things and he would have had some reason to do so, had I been

Mariana's confusion of spiritual and racial terms in her defence against the prelate's remarks about the spiritual honour of the attempted foundation is indicative of how synonymous racial and religious orthodoxy had become. He is wrong about the foundation not because *criollas* are not spiritually inept (this goes unchallenged) but because Inés de la Cruz is the completely virtuous founding mother and is not a *criolla*.

At this point it is useful to consider the two charges of which the prelate accuses *criollas*: *regalonas* and *chocolateras*. The first is connected to the nefarious effect the climate of the Indies was believed to have on its inhabitants, making them lazy and morally lax. The second charge is a refined version of the first, chocolate at this point being considered a drink of indulgence and luxury, consumed primarily by women of the New Spanish élite.[196] The misogynist assumptions underlying both charges are obvious: the *criolla* in this argument is simply an excessive woman. This excess of sexuality is precisely what the perfect Carmelite does not signify, and as a result of the cultural specificity of the arguments put forward, the *criolla* is thus not a Carmelite because of what is classed as her 'racial' difference.

Gerónima de la Asunción, the founding mother of the Carmelite convent of Manila, whose spiritual opinions are recorded by Bartolomé de Letona in his *La Perfecta Religiosa: Vida de Gerónima de la Asunción* (1622), acknowledges the differences between peninsular women and those born in the Indies, but points out that where such a difference has led to a change in practices, the *criollo* nuns cannot be accused of laxness:

> *De las Criadas: en las Indias casi desde la fundación de sus monasterios de cien años a esta parte, está en uso tener criadas casi todas las religiosas con sabiduría, consentimiento y licencia de sus prelados; que muchos de ellos y los más han sido y son doctos, celosos y temerosos de Dios. La razón en que esta permisión se funda parece que es que los referidos decretos Apostólicos se hicieron avista de los monasterios de Europa donde las mujeres son de más robusta salud y en sus comunidades en el refectorio se les administra guisada la comida y la cena y lo demás necesario para la vida humana. Todo lo cual por la mayor parte falta en las mujeres de esta] América, y en sus monasterios, que no tienen tanta providencia ni tanta salud y todos los días muy de mañana necesitan de desayunarse, y sino tuvieran criadas, fuera muy difícil el seguir las*

the foundress, and not such a profoundly saintly woman as our mother Inés de la Cruz, in whose footsteps came such a miserable creature as I] *Fundación* 70-71 AHCSJ.

[196] For more on these racial commonplaces see Solange Alberro (1990). Cf. the opinion that chocolate, apart from an indigenous food, was an aphrodisiac and the references made in many Inquisition trials to its being prepared by women in order to cast love-spells by feeding it to men.

Comunidades del Coro y otros ejercicios con la puntualidad y ejemplo con que siguen. Este punto en ningún autor le he visto en términos y necesita de examen y consulta.[197]

Apart from making clear that many of these procedures which might be considered relaxed are in fact permitted by learned prelates, Gerónima also points to the different financial status of the convents in Spain and in the Indies as an explanation. Her mention of these factors means that the polarities of what was considered a monolithic 'racial' difference are opened up and made relative by acknowledging its cultural valence. This movement is confirmed in her comments on fasting:

Del ayuno: En las Indias hay costumbre legítima de comer todos en las Cuaresmas y demás días de ayuno huevos y cosas de leche. Con que la prohibición que de estas cosas pone aquí la Regla no obligará en este Reino ni en los demás donde hubiere semejante costumbre. Y más diciendo la Regla que las monjas guarden la costumbre de la región.[198]

According to her, the Carmelite rule is in theory adaptable to regional and cultural differences, so these cannot be regarded as determining religious orthodoxy. The impossibility, however, of completely separating the cultural significance of practices from their religious one is manifest in the arguments concerning austerity and reform in Jesús María, and emphasises the interest the cloister holds for a study of acculturation.

Food in the convent is perhaps the most obvious example of the smooth appropriation of difference by the dominant model because it seems not to involve any structural or representational change to it. Thus, Inés de la Cruz is said to spike her soup with chilli as a penance, while all the food that appears in the convents is that of New Spain; a mixture of Iberian and indigenous dishes and ingredients. The only

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[197] [Ever since the foundation of monasteries in the Indies one hundred years ago, it has been normal practice for nearly every nun to have servants. This with the knowledge, consent and permission of the prelates, many of whom have been learned, zealous and god-fearing. The permission was justified by explaining that it seems that the said Apostolic decrees were made for European monasteries where the women are more robust and are provided with seasoned food at lunch and dinner as well as being given everything else necessary for life. All of which the women of this America lack, both in themselves and in their convents, not enjoying such providential charity nor health and having thus to eat breakfast very early every day and if they were not to have servants it would be difficult to follow the religious hours of the choir and other exercises with the requisite punctuality and exemplarity they do so. I have never seen this point commented on by any author and it needs debate and consultation.] Letona (1622) unpaginated.

[198] [There is a legitimate custom in the Indies that everyone eats eggs and milk products during Lent and on other fast days. Thus the prohibition written into the rule will not apply to this kingdom or to any other where there is a similar custom. Especially if the rule declares the nuns should keep the customs of the region.] Letona (1622) unpaginated.

occasion when this appropriation becomes difficult is when it takes on a significance that lifts it from the sphere of the material into the mental. It is chocolate, once more, which causes these difficulties. Several of the nuns are described as drinking only chocolate and not eating any food as a penance.[199] The ambivalent associations of chocolate have already been noted, and it is not surprising therefore to find Gerónima de la Asunción attempting to defend the substance:

> *Del Chocolate: [...] el chocolate natural y ordinario es bebida y así no quebranta el ayuno ni deroga a la piedad cristiana ni al merecimiento ni al intento que tuvo la Iglesia en instituir ayuno...*[200]

It is interesting that she champions '*chocolate natural y ordinario*', as several of the references to its use in the chronicles also make this caveat, saying the chocolate they refer to is not the luxurious and spiced drink usually consumed but a more primitive and simple version made with water rather than milk and containing no condiments. The impossibility of rescuing chocolate for ascetic signifying purposes however, is signalled by the new rule added to the Carmelite's vows: the nuns promise not to drink the substance, thus at once affirming their austerity, the purity of their spiritual archetype, and their New Worldliness.

Exemplary Histories

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the didactic drive in the New Spanish *vidas*, necessarily a 'modern' enterprise, in that it is directed at the future - however historical the writing project is in itself - results in a great deal of flexibility of narrative form, which in turn provides a remarkable illumination of context. The biographical format of the *vida* may also be considered in this light. Maravall writes on use of biography in the period by the ruling powers to sway and educate the masses:

> *... la época del Barroco descubre el valor de las biografías como vehículo de educación, o mejor dicho, de configuración - moral y política, cuando ésta, con*

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199 Sigüenza y Góngora (1683) 90/191.

200 [Natural ordinary chocolate is a drink {i.e. not a food} and so neither breaks fast nor abrogates Christian piety nor the worthiness nor the intention of the Church in instituting fasting] Letona (1622) Bk. 2.

fin de integración social, se dirige a un numero de gentes que [...] puede tomarse como muchedumbre de insuperable anonimato.[201]

Without disputing the undoubtedly loaded ideological meaning of the *vidas*, I would suggest that it is precisely those elements in these narratives which are supposed to bring the subject closer to the anonymous mass which escape complete appropriation for institutional purposes.[202]

The *vidas* were conceived as a gallery or theatre for penitents to learn from and the usefulness of them being always defined in relation to a norm can, as has been shown, provide extraordinarily detailed information about specific aspects of the social and economic reality of a period. Problems arise however because the *vida* is often not defined in relation to the norm, or as the 'true' as opposed to the 'false', but as a third term which escapes these binary oppositions: as the exemplary.[203] The 'impossibility' of the place occupied by the exemplary, and the dangers it posed to a didactic structure that worked primarily by way of binary oppositions, means that in these *vidas* there is a movement to 'domesticate' it - most clearly visible in this chapter in the mutations undergone by the representation of female spirituality.

Giulia Calvi has described the way in which the exemplary immediately focuses attention on the notion of imitation, and how these two ideas were jointly important in the period in the structuring and evaluation of behaviour and social practices by means of a constant process of comparison between the 'true' and the 'false':

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[201] [In the Baroque period the value of biography as an educational tool, or more precisely as a fashioning tool - moral and political, when for the purpose of social integration it is directed at a number of people who could be conceived of as a multitude of insuperable anonymity] Maravall (1990)211.

[202] For a re-reading of Maravall which also argues for a creative potential to Counter-Reformation ideology see Anne J. Cruz & Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992) Introduction. Cf. the afterword, 'The Subject of Control', by Anthony J. Cascardi. See also Greenblatt (1992)121, "Cultures are inherently unstable, mediatory modes of fashioning experience. [...] the rhetoric of absolute blockage is everywhere in the discourse of early modern Europe, but the reality is more porous, more open, more unsettled than it first appears.".

[203] Cf. de Certeau on the ambivalence this can give rise to in the hagiographic narrative, both at the level of form and that of didactic intent: *En montrant comment, par un saint (une exception) l'histoire s'est ouverte à la <puissance de Dieu> il crée une place ou le même et le loisir se rejoignent. Cette place exceptée est à la fois l'ailleurs et l'immuable. L'extraordinaire et le possible s'appuient l'un et l'autre pour construire la fiction ici mise au service de l'exemplaire. Cette combinaison en la forme d'un récit joue une fonction de <gratuité> qui se retrouve également dans le texte et dans son mode d'emploi. C'est une poétique du sens. Elle n'est pas réductible à une exactitude des faits ou de la doctrine sans détruire le genre même qui énonce. Sous les espèces d'une exception et d'un écart (c'est à dire par la métaphore d'un cas particulier) le discours crée une liberté par rapport au temps quotidien, collectif ou individuel, mais c'est un non-lieu.'* de Certeau (1977)279.

> *... la nozione di imitazione di un modello comporta di per sé una definizione di devianza, di non conformità, e questo discrimine fra virtu e vizio, fra verità e falsità struttura e attraversa tuti gli status propri di una società gerarchica che vuole evitare* messalliances.[204]

Yet the volatility of the exemplary as a category makes such a 'conspiracy theory' interpretation of binary social and sexual roles in the *vida* impossible to hold coherently. As Romeo di Maio points out, it is the contradiction within exemplarity (which is both the ultimate representation of the norm and yet completely surpasses it) that makes the *vida*'s didactic intent so equivocal and so revealing:

> *L'equivoco piú grave de queste vite era la proposta di modelli irripetibili, non essendo imitabili azioni che nel concetto della teologia spirituale richiedono carismi inaferrabili allo sforzo umano, essendo <grazie gratuite>.*[205]

The difficulty for these institutional powers of exploiting the *vidas* of virtuous nuns, either for the generic purity of the hagiographic form or the spiritual purity of hagiographic didacticism, lies precisely, if paradoxically, in their exemplary nature. In an analogous fashion, which the chronicles illustrate well, their value as models of cultural orthodoxy in the process of acculturation is also compromised. Méndez makes the classic distinction between the theory and practice of virtue, the reading of books and the doing of pious deeds, valorising practice precisely because it is a 'living example':

> *... quien desease aprender los establecimientos y constituciones de las carmelitas descalzas no tenía que buscar libro para aprenderlas, sino irse al convento de San José de México y allí hallaría los dechados vivos de la religión, allí vería practicado lo que en los libros podía estar impreso. Poco importa que en la religión haya saludables consejos, santos mandatos y perfectísimas constituciones si jamas éstas, aquellas, ni los otros se ponen en ejecución.*[206]

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[204] Calvi Ed. (1992)XXIII.

[205] Romeo di Maio, *Riforme e miti nella chiesa del cinquecento* (Napoli: Editori, 1973)275. The ambiguity of the exemplary as a category is strongly reminiscent of the ambiguity Daniel Arasse claims came to inhabit the image in the fifteenth century: *En effet, l'idée bien établie selon laquelle l'image est faite surtout pour les ignorants, les illettrés, le vulgaire ... et qu'elle est, dans le meilleurs des cas un remède à notre faiblesse est fondamentalement compromise si l'image se voit investie d'une partie du prestige attaché à la rhétorique antique et moderne, si elle participe en quelque sorte du grand art du discours.* 'Entre dévotion et culture: fonctions de l'image religieuse au XV siècle' in *Faire Croire: modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XII au XV siècles* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1981)131-146.139. Arasse pursues this argument in more detail, concentrating on the role of the viewer in 'Extases et visions béatifiques à l'apogée de la Renaissance: quatre images de Raphael' in *Melanges de l'Ecole Française: Moyen Age, Temps Modernes*, no.84 (1972): 401-92.

[206] [Whoever wishes to learn the customs and constitutions of the Discalced Carmelites need not look in a book to learn them but go to the convent of San José of Mexico and there they will find living examples of religion, there they will see practised what in the books is printed. It is of little importance that there is

The difficulties for the historical project of the New Spanish convent however, is that it has precisely to make the reverse journey; from live example back into writing. It is the very organisation of this historical project along 'exemplary' lines however that permits the *vida* to reveal the living nuns and the convents whose behaviour dramatises the pious text. Their histories provide narratives that suggest very complex ways of thinking about and of overturning the simple oppositions between enclosed and free, male and female, and New and Old. They show the writing nuns to be women who, without ever directly challenging the cloister, yet really were (within its limits) able to have a public, and powerful, presence.

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goodly advice in books, holy recommendations and perfect rules if neither these nor those are put in practice] Méndez, *Historia de la Fundación* 46v AHCSJ.

Chapter 3: From Confessional to Altar: the Letters of a *Criollo* Nun and Her Confessor's use of them in her Hagiography.

This chapter will begin by examining how the sixty manuscript letters by Sebastiana Josepha de la Santísima Trinidad, a nun in the convent of San Juan de la Penitencia in Mexico City, fit into a practice of writing in the period and what this can tell us about how and why women in the period wrote and what writing signified to them. I will then look at José Eugenio Valdés's hagiography of Sebastiana, printed in 1765, for which he used the letters as sources, to see how writing strategies differ between the nun and the priest, the confessional letter and the printed hagiography.[207] The sixty extant letters which I examined make up about 400 folios of closely written text. They are transcriptions of the originals and are authenticated by each scribe, all of whom are men, most of them clergymen. On the cover page of the sewn booklet the rubric tells that these books of transcriptions were given to Ana de San Bernardo, the Abbess of Sebastiana Josepha's convent, in November of 1760, three years after Sebastiana's death. They were donated by Sebastiana's brother, Miguel de Maya, a Franciscan friar. Maya himself was a confessor at the convent and it is probable that after Sebastiana's death he came into possession of the manuscripts. In the prologue to the book which contains Sebastiana's *vida*, José Eugenio Valdés says Maya commissioned the book from him but it is uncertain whether Valdés was able to examine the original manuscripts or only the transcriptions. Sebstiana's brother clearly identified an interest in promoting his sister's spiritual fame. His collection of her letters and his commissioning of Valdés to write her hagiography, the print costs of which were

[207] The number of works dealing with the writing of biography and autobiography by women in this period is enormous. For an excellent overview of the writing of autobiography by Spanish nuns, see Sonia Herpoel, *Autobiografías por mandato: una escritura femenina en la España del Siglo de Oro* (Antwerp: Doctoral Dissertation, 1987). Also, Darcy Donahue, 'Writing Lives: Nuns and Confessors as Auto/biographers in Early Modern Spain' in *Journal of Hispanic Philology*, no. 13 (1989): 230-239 and E. Ann Matter, 'The Personal and the Paradigm: the Book of Maria Domitilla Galluzzi' in *The Crannied Wall: Women, Religion and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, Craig A. Monson Ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992)87-103. Also Ann Jacobsen Schutte, 'Inquisition and Female Autobiography: The Case of Cecilia Ferrazzi' in Monson Ed. (1992)105-118. For the autobiographical writings of Mexican nuns see Kathleen Ann Myers, *Becoming a Nun in Seventeenth Century Mexico: An Edition of the Spiritual Autobiography of María de San Joseph* (PhD, Brown University, 1986) and Lavrin (1993). Roberto González Echevarría provides a good introduction to the generic and rhetorical complexities of New World autobiography in 'The Life and Adventures of Cipión: Cervantes and the Picaresque' in *Diacritics*, no. 10 (1980): 15-26. For an introduction to the intellectual and devotional universe of the convent in which these writings were produced, see Zarri (1990)21-50.

financed by devotees of the nun, fits very much into the pattern of investments made by élite family and religious groups in the colony to promote the cult of individuals who would bring them prestige in the present and divine grace for the hereafter.

Sebastiana's authorship of the letters is not in question but the fact that her practice of writing belonged to a tradition of confessional epistles seems seriously to compromise the degree of autonomy such a writing activity afforded. At one point in the letters, Sebastiana suggests that her confessor actually provides her with models on which to base her writing:

> *... mejor lo sabe todo Vuestra Paternidad, que lo está experimentando, que sólo su mucha virtud me puede sufrir tomando el trabajo de darme por escrito lo que yo he de ir escribiendo para hacerme fácil y quitarme los temores que de hacerlo he tenido ...*[208]

The extant letters are indeed very coherent in structure and fairly repetitive. Although Sebastiana's use of a thematic template provided by her confessor is not out of the question, what can only be described as the individuality of the language and tone of the epistles, as well a their idiosyncratic inclusion of details and anecdotes, rules out any mechanical copying. Sebastiana's verse, which is transcribed in various sections of the letters, should also be considered as marking her as an independent writer. The transcriptions of the poems are accompanied by notes from the scribes to the effect that it is not their correct place and that they are not part of the epistolary sequence written to confessors. There are no other clues given as to the circumstances surrounding Sebastiana's writing of poetry, but all of it is devotional and at one point she describes herself as composing couplets when inspired during prayer. The poems fall into very traditional lyric types, of very simple rhyme schemes and unremarkable imagery. Nevertheless, they show a command of rhythm that recurs in various prose passages in the letters. Though part of a different tradition and order of composition from the letters, the verse is integral to the process of writing and expression that Sebastiana undertakes.[209]

It is clear that the letters span a great number of years, but it is less easy to be precise about the exact periodization. Sebastiana was born in 1709 and was forty eight

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[208] [Your Grace, who has experienced this all, knows better than I and only your great virtue allows you to endure the trouble of giving me in writing what I must copy so as to make it easy for me and release me from the fears of doing it that I have had.] L31 f180. The manuscripts are held by the Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City and are numbered in the original.

[209] A transcription of Sebastiana's poetry is to be found in Appendix II.

when she died, having spent thirteen years in religion. From Valdés's information, we know that she did not begin to write seriously until she professed in San Juan de la Penitencia which was in 1744, at the age of thirty five. If the regularity of the act of writing is taken to be the most important criterion, this means she produced about five letters per year during her life in the cloister. Some of the letters certainly do fit a pattern of ritual production, being the recording of her experiences during the practice of the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Others, however, are clearly part of a confession which would also have taken place regularly, in preparation for communion.[210] Still other letters seem to fall completely outside these categories, having been written to record a very specific event or vision, usually on the orders of a confessor who has been particularly struck by it.[211] However, as no dates are ever used in any of the letters, it is impossible to gauge their exact frequency, or even how many of them fall into each of these categories.

Sebastiana's writing is part of a tradition of works carried out by women in order to fulfil a vow of obedience. There may be several reasons why confessors obliged women to write. The most obvious was that it allowed a more precise evaluation of the authenticity and correctness of the experiences. The confessor caught up in the production of saints and venerable persons was thus able to sanction or to claim credit for the spiritual adventures of his confessants much more authoritatively if there was a text upon which to base his judgement. Given that the normal condition of being a woman prohibited access to writing in all but the most extraordinary of situations, it is important to note that the condition of the nun seems to have *enforced* writing upon certain women:

> *¿ ... es posible que padezca tantas ansias y para mayor tormento me mande la obediencia que escriba y que lo haga a fuerza y con desconsuelo tanto que mejor tomara padecer un tormento, que tomar la pluma, y más experimentando tanto susto y embarazo que poniéndome a ello ni papel ni tinta servía sólo para mancharme, y no parecerme que me convenga estas cosas? Pero por obedecer a Vuestra Paternidad me olvidaré de todo lo que me viene al pensamiento ...*[212]

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[210] Cf. *Ayer sabado estuve con Vuestra Paternidad, que lo estaba deseando ...* [Yesterday, Saturday, I was with Your Grace, something I had been longing for] L14 f85 or *Ayer sabado vino Vuestra Paternidad y quedé con algun alivio ...* [Yesterday, Saturday, Your Grace came and I was somewhat comforted] L17 f93.

[211] L20 f101 and L18 f95.

[212] [... it's impossible that I should suffer so many anxieties and to torment me even more, I am commanded to write and obliged to do so, with such unwillingness that I would rather undergo another torment than use a quill. Especially as I feel so frightened and embarrassed that when I sit down to do it the paper and quill only serve to stain me (with ink) and to confirm to myself that these things are not suitable for me. But in order to obey Your Grace I will forget these things that come to my mind ...] L6 f49.

The trope of writing as suffering belongs to a Christian tradition which associated martyrdom with spiritual enlightenment and in this context was clearly intended to secure belief in the writer's words. Sebastiana's pain is the guarantee of her truth.[213]

The very process of writing also exposes Sebastiana to the immediate dangers of the Inquisition. Although references are oblique, it is clear that fear of the Holy Tribunal plays a part in Sebastiana's reluctance to write and must necessarily be read as more than an instance of the trope of *humilitas*, given the very real persecution of *beatas falsas y embaucadoras* - feigning holy-women impostors - this institution was involved in:

> *Me había parecido imposible volver a tomar la pluma, por muchos motivos suficientes, que me pusieron en mucho temor; a más de los muchos que siempre he tenido para escribir, y de lo escrito tengo bastantes desconsuelos, que sabe Dios que ya lo hago por obedecer.*[214]

These conflicting imperatives placed the writing nun in a morass of contradictions, revealing the complexity of the theological and representational problems posed by representing spiritual experiences. The major difficulty which writing poses for Sebastiana and to which she most frequently alludes is without a doubt located not in the doctrinal errors she may fall into or the dangers such a fall would expose her to, but in a profound disappointment with and anxiety about the epistemological value of the activity itself. The writing nun, trying to represent her divine and mystical experiences through a practice which excludes her at each level, both symbolic and real, cannot but be dissatisfied and worried about the work she produces. Unavoidably, language remains the category through which to evaluate and describe divine experience, and Sebastiana expresses this representational trap she is caught in

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[213] Significantly, early historians of America also used this trope of suffering in writing to secure the authority of their accounts. Cf. Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (London: Yale University Press, 1993)67 on Las Casas and Oviedo edging themselves, as close as they dared, "to a secularized, scientific analogue of that state [martyrdom]". Cf. also John Leddy Phelan, *The Millenial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970)59 on how the authority of experience and that of Divine illumination is combined in Jerónimo de Mendieta's writing: "Empirical experience was not Mendieta's only self-justification. He claimed that the Holy Ghost had revealed to him certain insights into the character of the Indians. Mendieta, consequently, spoke [...] both as a man of experience and as a mystic.".

[214] [It seemed impossible to take up the pen again, having sufficient reasons to be very frightened, on top of the many which I have always had about writing and I regret very much what has already been written; God knows I only do it in order to obey.] L22 f110-11.

through a comparison which sets Fallen linguistic inadequacy against the transparency of the prelapsarian Word which she experiences during her mystical trances:

> *Con tan bien ordenadas razones se manifiestan todas las necesidades que mi alma padece y unos amorosos sentimientos tan verdaderos y ardientes. Con tal abundancia de razones y todas tan acomodadas al intento y sin el uso de la lengua, se entiende en un modo claro muy diferente de éste que usamos ...*[215]

In another letter she emphasises how she uses this perfect language in spiritual communication with the Virgin:

> *se me deshace el corazón en amorosas ternuras, tan encendidas que no las pudiera pronunciar mi torpe lengua; como lo sabe hacer el alma, con tal modo que no pudiera tener con mucho estudio tan prontas las razones para desahogarme en dulces alabanzas ...*[216]

This opposition between transparency and inadequacy and the general discussion about Truth in representation clearly had a long and honourable intellectual genealogy much before Sebastiana began writing. She does not enter this scholarly discussion in any but the most superficial of ways and certainly does not set out to make a contribution to it. Instead, the letters bear testimony to the very real emotions and doubts such a philosophical conundrum posed for the writing nun. Sebastiana asks the chief question repeatedly; how is she to translate spiritual experience into words without betraying its substance? In the following quotation, the alienation of writing from divine experience is also expressed in terms of the passing of time which sows doubts in her mind:

> *Acabados aquellos fervores que todo me parecía poco y ahora estoy confusa y quisiera dudar de lo que pasó en aquel tiempo, porque ahora me parece imposible.*[217]

Sebastiana's anxiousness to rejoin the state of communion with the divine that she reaches in these mystical trances is marked in the letters by a habitual use of the

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[215] [My soul's needs manifest themselves with such well ordered reasons and such true and ardent loving feelings, with such an abundance of justifications and so fitted to the purpose and all without using language, that everything is understood in a very clear way, far different to the one we use.] L51 f322.

[216] [My heart dissolves in amorous tenderness, so ardent that my clumsy tongue cannot pronounce it though my soul is able to, providing fitting ways of unburdening myself through sweet praises in a way that not even years of study could enable.] L57 f348.

[217] [When those trances are over it all seems very little to me and now I am confused and doubt what happened during that time because now it seems impossible to me.] L52 f32. Sebastiana also hints at the incommensurability of her experience and any representation of it by referring to her body. The physical effects of divine communion make writing almost impossible and certainly inaccurate; *y como esto tan atontada, va este papel muy fuera del intento que llevaba. Así es todo lo mio, sin fundamento.* [And as I am so beside myself and stunned, this letter is far from what I intended. Everything I do is like this; without any guarantee.] L13 f83.

present tense to describe her experiences. This is particularly effective when she reports speech, making the conversation with God appear continuous:

> *... y así le digo palabras dulces y amorosas que no debiera decirlas si atendiera a mi bajeza, pero se avivan tanto las ansias de verlo y darle un abrazo que ya le digo que ¿hasta cuándo me tiene en esta vida?*[218]

The letters are not only the record of this 'continuous past' however, and it is also their immediacy, their inscription of the very moment at which they are written, that makes them such valuable documents. While she was writing her twenty-fifth letter, for example, Sebastiana Josepha shed tears. She records her bodily reaction and by doing so provides us with an idea of how the *don de lágrimas* worked as a *practice* - a very different representation of it to that contained in the various spiritual-didactic materials in which discussions about it can also be found.

> *... y con ésto se me salen las lágrimas, y no quisiera me faltaran ni de día ni de noche, que para mi, son las lágrimas el mejor regalo para pasar esta vida.*[219]

This function of recording the immediate in the letters is only one of the writing strategies they display in relation to time. The majority of the letters take a confessional temporal stance, narrating events as being in the past. The greatest problem in this instance is, of course, beginning, for to begin acknowledges the practice of writing, the construction of experience through memory and the very loss of the immediacy it is intended to capture:

> *Padre de esta pobre alma, como ha tiempo que no se ha podido escribir, me hallo confusa, sin entender por dónde dar principio en cosas de tanta dificultad.*[220]

How is Sebastiana to translate her divine experience into temporal terms and organise it into a narrative? Moreover, how is she to describe the difference, which appears incommensurable, between the moment of her experience and the time that has passed since? How, in effect, is she to write her own history?

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[218] [and so I say loving and tender words to Him, which I shouldn't were I to remember my lowliness, but the desire to see Him and to embrace Him is so great that I ask Him, until when does He think to keep me in this Life?] L14 f85.

[219] [and now, because of this, tears spring to my eyes and I hope they will never leave me, by day or by night. For me, tears are the best comfort in this Life.] L25 f142.

[220] [Dear Father of this poor soul; as it has been some time since I was able to write, I find myself confused, without any notion of how to begin a task of such difficulty.] L50 f313.

The process of writing involves a kind of attention to past experience that obviously places a strain on Sebastiana and she often expresses the difficulties she has in terms of pain and depression:

> *Mi Padre: me hallo con la confusión de siempre teniendo bastante que poder escribir y todo se va de la memoria.*[221]

and:

> *... y queriendo obedecer y decir lo que me pasa no se ha podido, porque se cierran los ojos y falta la razón, y querer y no poder es confusión.*[222]

In a striking image, her thoughts seem to her a labyrinth where she loses hope and becomes impatient:

> *...aveces no se como entenderme en este laberinto de mi pensamiento, donde se me consume la esperanza [...] que no se pueden decir ni entender, como cabe tanto en el pensamiento que me revienta la cabeza y pudiera perder la paciencia ...*[223]

Sebastiana Josepha lived in an environment that encouraged self-reflection and she was forced to narrate her 'self' by the priests who ordered her to write down her experiences. The introduction of general confession as an annual sacrament by the Council Trent had meant it became the privileged method of religious acculturation. It involved the priest in a dialogue with an individual whose boundaries came to be redefined precisely by this process of constructing and narrating the passing of time and the actions that occurred in this temporal space. New Spanish nuns would have been used to giving a written account of their conscience to their confessor and many *vidas* written by men use this kind of material as a primary source for the biography of their pious spiritual daughters.

The minuteness of these *exámenes de consciencia* which Sebastiana underwent and their status as evidence in the trial of her spiritual authenticity is clear. One confessor constrains Sebastiana to give evidence in what is, from what she recounts, an extremely violent manner:

> *Hizo muy menudo examen de toda mi vida, sin pasarse ni la más ligera palabra, con tal espíritu que no se cansaba los días enteros; con tanto empeño que me*

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221 [Dear Father I am in the same confusion as always, having so much to write and everything escaping my memory.] L41 f253.

222 [and though wanting to obey and tell what happens to me, I have been unable to because my eyes close and I lose the thread, and wanting to but not being able makes me confused.] L5 f38.

223 [sometimes I do not know what to make of this labyrinth of my thoughts where all my hope is consumed {...} I cannot express or make it understood how I can have so many thoughts that my head feels as if it is exploding and I am on the verge of losing patience.] L42 f263-264.

tenía espantada y tan afligida como si me viera en el tribunal de Dios, que sólo morir me faltara.[224]

and ends by condemning her in the most absolute terms, recommending that she be taken to the Inquisition:

Que a su entender era Ilusa, y hablaba herejías.[225]

On this occasion Sebastiana is lucky enough to have other confessors who disagree with this man's judgement and overrule his recommendation. Nevertheless, the dangers that the confessional and its stories held for both parties is made evident.

Estando en esta amargura se me vino a la memoria toda mi vida y los grandes trabajos, tristezas y vergüenzas que he pasado tan patente que espantada me parecía milagro haberlo podido aguantar ...[226]

It is undoubtedly clear that Sebastiana is able to carry out the kind of reflection about the self that a general confession requires. This notion of the fashioning of subjectivity through language has become a particularly interesting area of investigation for the Early Modern period.[227] The principal claim of the New Historicist approach in this respect is that the connection between lived experience and written memory of it is more than purely mimetic, and that what traces we have of past subjects and events are always mediated through language. Sebastiana herself acknowledges that writing actually *makes* her remember details she had forgotten. In the example she gives, it is an interpretation of an element forming part of a vision which she remembers, rather than simply a description of the element; it is as if writing somehow prompted the theological gloss on an otherwise purely phenomenological memory:

... como toda la hermosura de flores blancas y encarnadas que rodeaban su Divina Persona representaban todas las virtudes.[228]

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[224] [He made a detailed examination of all my life, not ignoring a single word and with such energy he would not tire for days on end. He was so zealous that he terrified me and upset me so much I felt I was at the Last Judgement and all I needed to do was die.] L8 f66.

[225] [In his opinion I was a false saint and spoke only heresies.] L8 f67.

[226] [While in this state of bitterness, my entire life came into my memory, the great difficulties, sadnesses and shame that I have so obviously endured. It was very frightening and a miracle that I was able to withstand it.] L45 f282.

[227] For the New Historicist approach see Joel Fineman, *The Subjectivity Effect in Western Literary Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1991) and Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1990). Jean Delumeau's *Le Péché et la Peur: la culpabilisation en Occident XIII - XVIII siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1983) presents a more broadly cultural history which provides great insight into Sebastiana's writing practice. Cf. particularly the chapter 'Le <mal-à-l'aise> religieux' 339-363 which deals with the struggles with guilt and the penitential regimes proper to people who had professed religious vows.

[228] [as well as the great beauty of white and red flowers that surrounded her divine presence (the Virgin) and how they represented all the virtues.] L29 f167.

The construction of the self can then be conceived as coming from a model and not as being simply invented. Thus, the repetition in the letters of certain feelings and emotional states can thus be linked to the confessional structure of the texts which privilege types of experience such as humility and its connected states of self-abasement and modesty. This certainly makes more sense than seeing them as representing an exaggerated character trait in Sebastiana herself, which would be the necessary conclusion of a naive naturalistic reading of the text.

Sebastiana's reproduction of many of the directions contained in spiritual handbooks of the period may thus also be seen as denoting the fact that her spirituality is not unique but rather ingeniously constructed, like many others, by the didactic enterprises of the Catholic church:

> *No mostrar particular inclinación a ninguna, aunque a mi me la tengan [...] No hablar de lo que me ha pasado, en donde he estado; ni por modo de agradecimiento he de alabar cosa de afuera, y en todo estar con cuidado y más cuando asistiere a las religiosas, mirando que no lo merezco, tomando el más bajo lugar, como se pueda.*[229]

Her description of a piety formed by reading practices encourages a similar conclusion, though in this case the mechanic character of repetition is partially abandoned in favour of a more positive notion of the amount of participation allowed to the individual in the reading process:

> *A mi parecer, todo cuanto se puede pensar bueno viene de la oración y lección [sic] de buenos libros.*[230]

Towards the end of Sebastiana's writing career, the letters become much more expressive of an attempt to understand her spiritual career as a whole, the summation of her life. Serious illness and increasing frailty perhaps made Sebastiana very aware of her imminent death. The popularity of the *Ars Moriendi* in this period has been documented and it is almost certain that such books would have made up part of the convent library and perhaps even the individual libraries of nuns.[231] The movement

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[229] [To not show any special affection, though others show it to me {...} Not to speak of what happens to me or where I have been. Not to praise anything from outside, even out of gratitude. And in everything to be careful; especially when I help the nuns, remembering that I am not worthy and taking the lowliest place as far as I can.] L28 f157.

[230] [In my opinion everything good comes from prayer and from the example/reading of virtuous books.] L7 f58.

[231] Cf. Marcel Bataillon, *Erasmo y España: estudios sobre la historia espiritual del siglo XVI* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966).

towards total evaluation and recollection in Sebastiana's later letters is very reminiscent of the didactic approach of this kind of literature. She is greatly disturbed by the idea that she has not progressed spiritually. Clearly, the writing of confessional letters helps to construct this teleological notion of a subjectivity always being fashioned, reaching for greater heights of virtue:

> *Y con ésto ya está obedecido Vuestra Paternidad en poner lo de los tres días, que el haberme resistido tanto, ya se verá si tenía razón, pues todo no quiere decir nada, y así ha sido todo lo demás, para mi confusión y vergüenza y sin sacar provecho en ninguna virtud, quedándome como siempre, en esta mala vida, sin fervor ni aliento. Siento muy menos la mortificación y penitencia de estos tiempos de la de los pasados; y esto de no ir adelante, no puede ser bueno...* [232]

While this description of her writing activities makes the reader very aware of how manipulated Sebastiana was in her writing, it simultaneously provides a reminder however of how such an activity was also a tool for her to manipulate her 'life' and produce effects of 'self', such as the *bruto* below, which, I would argue, gesture at an independence beyond their surface conformity and subservience:

> *Y Vuestra Paternidad me confunde, sabiendo las cosas que me está mandando que escriba y teniendo tan perdida la memoria que por unas se olvidan otras y siempre es lo menos de lo mucho que Vuestra Paternidad me apunta, que ponga lo más acertado. Me parece que todo se quemara para asegurarme de muchos peligros, y mentiras, de malicia y de ignorancia; que de mi maldad todo puede ser para hallarme más cargada en la otra vida como lo estoy aquí padeciendo sin provecho como un Bruto que estorba y le dan golpes y no entiende, y lo siente pero no aprovecha, como no entiende, se queda dando trabajo.*[233]

The disturbing figure of the brute beast as writing nun is one I will return to later in the chapter.

The Letters and their New Spanish Context

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[232] [With this, Your Grace's order is carried out. I have recorded what happened in those three days, after having resisted so strongly. We will see if you were correct, because all of it is meaningless, only confusing and embarrassing me without helping me to gain any virtue, remaining always in my evil ways without fervour or energy. The penitences and mortifications I do now, I feel much less vividly than past ones and this inability to progress cannot bode well] L58 f352.

[233] [Your Grace confuses me, already being informed of the things you order me to write and knowing that my memory is so bad. Some of the things Your Grace asks that I should write down accurately, I have forgotten and others I only remember a little of. I wish everything could be burnt to safeguard me from many dangers, lies, malice and ignorance. Because of my ignorance it is very possible that I should find myself as tormented in the next life as I am in this, suffering as I do like a Beast that annoys and is punished with blows and does not understand. It feels them but does not learn and as it does not profit from them, not understanding them, it gives only more trouble.] L57 f344.

The details and *exemplae* included in Sebastiana's texts are poorly served by an exclusively psychological reading that evaluates her letters from a simple autobiographical point of view. They can also be seen as revealing what the stakes were, for a specific nun, of a project in acculturation that placed a particular emphasis on femininity and resulted in the enclosure of a large proportion of women from the New Spanish élite. The letters also serve, for instance, to delineate the pious timetable of activities Sebastiana follows, thus making them a very clear account of the devotional practices of nuns in the period:

> *Recé la hora de quince misterios que siempre se la rezo a mi Dulcísima Madre. El ejercicio de la Cruz y el de la Muerte duraron los tres días. Las disciplinas fueron largas y todos los días, sin poder hacer otras [...] La oración fue muy profunda (no se cómo decir que no la entiendo)*[234]

Sebastiana's letters provide information about her penitential eating habits, much of the material describing unutterably painful practices and rituals. Her battles with food are not only battles with her body and its appetites however, but a global struggle with evil, the devil and all his cohorts.[235] Although misogynist conceptions of the female body were certainly internalised by women, it is impossible to generalise about this and in contrast quite clear that by considering other factors, more linked to issues of autonomy and power, the function of food in such texts as the letters becomes both more complex and more distinguishable. The culinary world of Sebastiana's writing may seem distant from church politics, but the practices which she describes must be read as belonging to the same universe.[236] Thus, the discussion about her battle with her appetite reveals that chocolate and meat were consumed regularly in the convent. The ambiguity of chocolate as a legitimate food for

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[234] [I prayed the hour of the fifteen mysteries which I always dedicate to the Virgin. The exercise on the Cross and on the Death lasted for the three days. The disciplines were prolonged and took place each day, I was unable to do any more {...} prayer was very deep (I do not know how to describe it adequately, I do not understand it)] L26 f143/4. She also notes down her exercises in L58 f350.

[235] On the problems of relating spiritual discourse to modern conceptions of sexual self-definition see E. Ann Matter, 'Discourses of Desire: Sexuality and Christian Women's Visionary Narratives' in *Journal of Homosexuality* 18, no. 3/4 (1989/90): 119-131.

[236] The importance of food in female piety (as eating practice as well as symbol) has been extensively studied. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) and Rudolf M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). The hagiographies of women as well as the didactic texts directed at them show that food was more a female concern than a male one, especially fasting and eucharistic miracles (with the exception of consecration miracles where it was unthinkable for women to intervene). Hagiographers were expected to include at least passing references to food abstention as well as to Eucharistic piety in their accounts of saintly women.

consumption in the cloister has already been explored, while the problems posed by meat for ascetic signifying purposes are self evident:

> *Como desde este tiempo ayunaba y sin tomar cosa hasta medio día, y a la noche muy corta colación, pasándose muchos tiempos sin tomar chocolate, hasta que de un todo lo dejé, que ni el Domingo puedo comer nada, y siempre sin comer carne. Esto, que para mi no ha sido virtud, lo notaron y pareciéndoles me quería hacer particular, debiendo seguir el común. Siendo este reparo, con más rigor en este santo convento, que le hizo muy mal rostro la Madre Maestra a todo, mandándome con enojo que todos los días había de tomar chocolate y había de comer carne ...*[237]

The practices of the New World are always dangerously volatile, ready to slip into native and idolatrous activities at the slightest interpretative turn. By forcing Sebastiana to eat what the community eats, the teacher of novices not only asserts the power of the group, but also reveals its weakness - its orthodoxy threatened by one member's dissidence. It becomes more than clear that Sebastiana's food practices have a political resonance which overpasses the hagiographic purpose of signifying humility that such descriptions ostensibly have as their main objective.

A similarly worldly function can be ascribed to the meticulous descriptions of Sebastiana's heavenly visions in which the affective relationship between God and the visionary self is expressed through sensuous description and attention to the minutiae of the apparition:

> *Y vi interiormente como una laguna que de las aguas salían unas manos muy feas y negras que me hubieran cogido porque yo estaba muy pegada a la orilla. A este tiempo vi a mi Señor, puesto en la Cruz, y con mucho amor, bajó un brazo y abrasó mi alma que estaba en el lado del corazón con mucha seguridad y el otro brazo le quedó pendiente de la cruz. Su amorosísimo rostro, muy humilde, inclinado a mi lado y muy lastimado pero muy lindo y sus ojos bellísimos arrosados en lágrimas que le salían como hermosísimas perlas que causaban ternura y grande amor.*[238]

This kind of rhetoric is even more marked in visions of the Virgin:

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[237] [At this time I was in the habit of fasting rigorously until midday and eating very little at night. For a long time I did not drink chocolate until eventually I gave it up completely. On Sunday I eat nothing and I never eat meat. This, which in me was not a virtue (but a necessity) was noted and (they) thought I wanted to set myself apart when I should have been living in community. The censure {concerning community} was very rigorous in this holy convent and the nun who taught the novices angrily ordered that I should drink chocolate every day and that I eat meat] L22 f112-13.

[238] [And I saw in an interior mode something like a lake. From the water came some ugly black hands that could have caught me because I was very near the shore. At this moment I saw my Lord on the Cross, who with great affection lowered a hand and embraced my Soul which was on the side of my heart, comforting me greatly and the other arm remained on the cross. His loving face, very humbly inclined towards me and terribly injured, but very beautiful, his wonderful eyes bathed in tears which fell like beauteous pearls, encouraging tenderness and profound love.] L24 f131.

... y la veo con la hermosura de Reina y Majestad de Señora, ricamente vestida y también compuesta y tal gracia que la hace más linda el bellísimo rostro, humilde y alegre, con un modo de mirar tan gracioso, modesto y muy señor. El pelo muy lindo, que le adorna con mucho primor: unas hondas que le asientan por su Divino rostro hasta bajo de los hombros con mucho lucimiento y todo recogido por el cuello. El pelo ensortijado todo; la hermosura y bizarría es admirable, toda linda, hermosísima y vertiendo alegría con algo de resplandor del blanco y nácar de su bellísimo rostro.[239]

It is obvious from this account that Sebastiana is attempting to meet part of Jean Gerson's (1363-1429) requirements in *De Probatione Spiritum*, which had become a commonplace text for testing the truth of visions.[240] This kind of description is also almost certainly fulfilling the secondary function of providing information from which a religious image could be manufactured, a process which would be undertaken as a matter of course if the cult of the visionary Sebastiana were to be successful.

Even if the imbrication of Sebastiana's heavenly visions in the social universe of the colony is evident, they remain singularly uninformative about her quotidian existence within the cloister. In contrast, her nights of suffering and various demonic and purgatorial visions are very revealing. This would seem to be intimately tied both to the didactic elements at work in the letters and to Sebastiana's position as a privileged mediator between heaven and these other realms.

The nights which Sebastiana passes in the choir are described in nearly every letter and by virtue of repetition and vivid sensory detail, they take on a nightmarish reality. In the fifteenth letter, Sebastiana's description of her physical and mental state

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[239] [and I see her with all the beauty of a Queen and majesty of a great Lady, dressed richly and so gracefully composed that her face appears more beautiful, humble and happy, with a way of looking so charming, modest and sovereign. Her hair was lovely, decorating her with great style, waves coming down her divine face just below her shoulders with much grace and all tied back around her neck. Her hair was curled, its beauty and style admirable, she was completely beautiful, lovely and gave off happiness with the resplendent white and pink of her beautiful face.] L24 f132. See also L29 f164-5 as well as L30 f169 for an account, in the same manner, of the archetypal mystical experience of transverberation.

[240] This treatise on how to identify false and true prophets was written in response to another nun's spiritual experiences - Bridget of Sweden's visions. Gerson emphasises the circumspection with which novices in things spiritual, especially women and young people, should be treated. Moreover, he warns against taking women's prolix narrations to their confessors too seriously. Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Desclée, 1974)180 & 184. On the tightening and rationalising of procedures to ascertain the authenticity of visions experienced by women see William A. Christian Jr., *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). Cf. Émile Mâle, *L'Art religieux de la fin du XVI siècle, du XVII siècle et du XVIII siècle: étude sur l'iconographie après le Concile de Trent* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), particularly Ch. IV, 'La Vision et l'Extase' for the difficulties of representing these states in painting and sculpture 'correctly'. For Mexico see Manuel González Galvan, 'El Humanismo en las artes plásticas de Nueva España' in *Humanismo y ciencia en la formación de México*, Carlos Herrejón Peredo Ed. (México: V Coloquio de Antropología e Historia Regionales, 1984)163-178.

and the turbulent nights she passes is magnificent. The prose is rhythmic, some of the phrases scanning easily and showing her talent for verse:

> *Y no se cómo diga lo que siente mi corazón, que es un desfallecimiento, con suave aliento, que en el padecer hallo descanso: pero conociéndome tan para nada, con gusto recibiera que a este cuerpo pesado Dios lo castigara con enfermedad que de ella muriera, que me atormenta, vida mal empleada del parecer, parece que hago y no se hace nada, las noches en miedos y fatigas y repugnancias las paso en el coro, que es una lástima, que pudiera hacer mucho y no hago nada. Cuando entro en el coro qué pensamientos tan diversos, qué cosas pasan de perder la paciencia; con apariencia que dan espanto. Con los golpes son los sustos que entiendo no volver, porque temo que por mí se alborote el convento. Y porque me han visto; que es vergüenza. Los peligros de matarme cuando sin saber, se acaba la vela y ando sin saber por donde. ¡Cosa temerosa! que me confunde. Cómo será ésto, y lo que más siento es que sin luz, me estoy lo más de la noche, esperando que me cojan. Me asusto, pero no tengo alientos de pararme. Debo de ser una de día y otra de noche, según las [batallas] que padezco y la profundidad de allá dentro. A tiempos da Dios en estas noches, unos tan conocidos movimientos que el Alma y cuerpo se estremecen y hasta los pelos se erizan.*[241]

The spectacle that Sebastiana presents is not only played out on her body though, there is also an impressive *son et lumière*, extravaganza that accompanies the nights of rapture. Noise is the overwhelming manifestation of demonic presence in these circumstances. It breaks the quiet of the night, the silence of a sacred place of prayer which should, were it ever to be filled with noise, be filled with harmonious sounds. In Sebastiana's nights, however, wild beasts of the desert and scavengers of the urban world break into the cloister and inhabit its most holy place; the choir. The most terrible transformation the devil brings about is to cause Sebastiana moments of despair and it is during these that she becomes an animal herself.[242] Again, animals disturb meditation, but sometimes the mention of them is so matter-of-fact that it is difficult to know if the letter refers to real animals or to their demonic counterparts:

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[241] [And I do not know how to express what my heart feels, it is a fainting, with a gentle sigh, so that in the suffering, I find comfort. But knowing myself unworthy, I would willingly accept that this heavy body be punished by illness and die from it because nothing torments me more than my useless life. It seems as if I do nothing, the nights in the choir pass amidst fear and fatigue and disgust. It is such a waste because I could accomplish many things and instead do nothing. When I go into the choir, I have so many different thoughts, so many things make me lose patience with their terrible appearance, with blows and moments of fear that I resolve never to go back for fear of disturbing the entire convent. They have seen me, and it is shameful. The danger of killing myself, when the candles go out and I walk about without knowing where; it is terrible! I am confused at how this is so, all I know is that for the greatest part of the night I am without lights, worried that they will find me. I get frightened because I lose my breath and cannot stand. I must be one person by day and another by night according to the battles I undergo and the deepness of being there inside. Sometimes God causes certain familiar movements that my soul and body tremble and even my hairs stand on end.] L15 f86. See also L6 f54.

[242] L6 f50.

Al presente es tal el alboroto de perros y gatos que parece que abalean y aturden la cabeza.[243]

In a subsequent letter Sebastiana makes clear that her description of how monkeys, the animals of the jungle and of the market place, tear angrily around the choir is a translation of the experience she has undergone - the only means she has of interpreting it:

> *... en este conocimiento estaba cuando se armó tan espantoso ruido que toda me asusté y el corazón temblando. Daban unas carreras, como si se hicieran pedazos y tiraran con todo el coro bajo, dando unos tronidos como bombas que allí reventaban y como zastillos [sic] y salían unas voces o chillidos como de rabiosas monas (Así me he querido explicar y digo cómo ello fué) que en el silencio de la noche sonaban con más espanto y congoja que me quedo espantada ...* [244]

The Return of the World

It is not necessarily only the present and the everyday which intervene in Sebastiana's visions and the eventual construction of her saintly subjectivity. Many of her spiritual experiences make reference to what may be obliquely called 'the past'. She certainly employs a notion of change that is startlingly concrete; her body becoming different the more virtuous she is:

> *... los llamamientos de Dios eran tan penetrantes, que estando tan robusta, y de buen parecer me puse muy pálida, y en el modo de tratar con todas muy moderado, como también en el vestido, y asistiéndome con mucho cuidado mi Padre, dando vuelo a todas las dificultades que eran muchas...*[245]

As a result of this change, what was before this transformation is necessarily reinterpreted according to the new values. All the knowledge of the world it is no longer licit for the pious nun to have, inhabits this past. The opulent and courtly way of life and

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[243] [At the moment the noise of dogs and cats is so great that it seems to pierce and daze the brain.] L15 f87.

[244] [I was in this state when such a terrible noise began that I became terrified and my heart trembled. They ran about as if they were tearing themselves to pieces and bringing the lower choir down. Such groans like bombs exploding there and like bangs. Voices and screams like rabid monkeys (I have explained myself in this way and thus am telling how it was) that in the silence of the night they resounded with such fright and pain that I remain terribly shocked.] L25 f136. Emphasis mine.

[245] [The summons from the Lord was so strong that although I was in good health and robust, I became very pale and very moderate in my manner as well as my dress. My father confessor helped me in all this, ridding me of all the difficulties, which were many.] L7 f56. Cf. Mary Elizabeth Perry, 'Subervsion and Seduction: Perceptions of the Body in Writings of Religious Women in Counter-Reformation Spain' in *Religion, Body and Gender in Early Modern Spain*, Alain Saint-Saëns Ed. (San Francisco: Mellon Research University Press, 1991)67-78.

the bustle of the city that Sebastiana represents in vision after vision are the most repeated instances of this kind of prohibited knowledge. From Valdés's account we know that Sebastiana spent various years in retirement in the house of noble benefactors and no doubt her knowledge of courtly lifestyle comes from this period in her life. Thus, temptation lies in the city or in a city house, in any case, definitely outside the cloister. In one particularly vivid description, Sebastiana is eloquent on how such remembrances of the past effectively remove her from the choir and the cloister:

> *Como me veo tan gravemente metida en pensamientos de mundo, como si me entrara en las casas de los ricos, así veo todo lo que hacen; cómo entran, y salen y cómo son servidos en el regalo de la mesa, con el gusto que viven y todo cuanto puede pasar lo estoy mirando y entendiendo con tanta viveza como si fuera cierto. Se me va la atención de lo que rezo.*[246]

Significantly, such removal often involves the double sin of imagining herself eating in public in a carnivalesque setting, outside the holy enclosure:

> *Mis locos pensamientos; tales que me sacan a las fiestas y plazas, comiendo de los puestos muchos que hay en tales funciones que las veo, y las tuviera por ciertas, sino me hallara en este coro.*[247]

In another letter, the pleasures of food and civic entertainment are repeated and their danger to piety emphasised in her renunciation of them:

> *Me hallé en otra parte, con mucha confusión mía, donde estaban unas mujeres sentadas en festejo muy gustosas. Dábanles muchos platos de muy buenos guisados; de todo me daban y no tomé cosa, que estaba disgustada.*[248]

In many visions however, the city takes on a more menacing character, devoid of any of the pleasures it can provide. Its promiscuous sociability and open spaces become nightmarishly threatening. Numerous visions begin by setting Sebastiana in this terrifying scenery of an empty public place which is then gradually taken over by crowds:

> *Me hallé (no se cómo) en una parte, que parecía plazuela grande y desembarazada; las gentes las veía muy lejos de mi.*[249]

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[246] [I find myself so utterly immersed in worldly thoughts it is as if I went into rich people's houses and saw all they did. How they come and go, how they are feasted at table, with what indulgence they live. Everything that happens I observe and perceive so vividly it is as if it were real and my attention wanders from what I am praying.] L33 f195.

[247] [My crazy thoughts are such that they drag me out to parties and public squares, where I eat from the many stalls that there are on such occasions, and I see them so clearly that I would believe they were real only I find myself in this choir.] L9 f72.

[248] [I found myself, very confused, in another place where some women were sitting feasting. They were enjoying themselves and were being given many plates of very tasty stews. They offered a little of everything to me, but I accepted nothing because I was distressed] L33 f194.

This halllucinatory imagery of space and claustrophobia which the city affords is repeated in nearly all of these purgatorial visions.[250] There are various references to mud and swamps which may be descriptions of how Sebastiana remembered Mexico City to look after the prolonged floods that devastated it in the seventeenth century:

> *Halléme privada y ajena de todos los sentidos; andando por unas calles que no se podía dar paso, de un asqueroso lodo y arcos. Las paredes muy altas y negras, muchos hombres andaban y yo entre ellos, muy espantada y llena de confusión, sin saber lo que me había sucedido, ni esperanzas de salir de tan grave aflicción, que no es posible decir cómo yo estaba, y lo mucho que padecí.*[251]

The disconsolate tone of many of the descriptions however is impossible to ascribe to any apparent cause, except Sebastiana's elusive 'self', and in fact constitutes what may be one of the most concrete traces of such a subjectivity to be found in her writing. The charge of emotion in such language is extraordinarily tangible:

> *... me vi en un lugar espantosísimo, como el era no saber decir, pero para darme algo a entender, sería como el más triste barrio de los más retirados; era muy grande, y había muy pocas casitas que de verlas se arrancaba la Alma [sic] de tristeza: andaban unos que parecían hombres, muy zancudos, hablando en lengua que no se entendía: vi una cosa muy alta que parecía torre que no sé decir como era; allá en lo último había como tabladito en donde estaban bailando y saltando ...* [252]

Occasionally, the vision of the city provides the perfect *mise en scène* for a particularly horrific demonic encounter in which the devil is disguised as someone Sebastiana knows:

> *En una calle muy ancha, había una fuente de agua, en que estaban lavando (la luz era poca) andaban unas mujeres, como que salían a misa: iba una con su saya parda, toda tapada con su manto, y muy alta, yo, pensando que era la que había visto lavando, la llamaba tres veces, por su nombre, y no me respondió:*

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[249] [I found myself (I do not know how) in a place that was like a big square, very empty, I could only see people far away in the distance.] L28 f155.

[250] L39 f242.

[251] [Lacking all senses and feeling alienated, I saw myself walking through streets difficult to move through. There was disgusting mud. There were arches, the walls were huge and black. There were many men and I walked amongst them, very frightened and confused, not knowing what had happened to me and without any hope of getting out of such an affliction. It is impossible to say how I felt and how much I suffered.] L23 f129.

[252] [I found myself in a terrifying place. It is impossible to describe it, but to make myself understood I will say it was like the saddest, most remote quarter of a city. It was very big and there were very few houses, to see them pained the soul with sadness. What looked like long-legged men walked about speaking an incomprehensible language. I saw a very high thing that looked like a tower, I do not know how else to describe it. At the top there was something like a stage and they were dancing and jumping.] L24 f134.

volvió la cara con mucha cólera y al verle tan espantosa y la nariz grande con punta dije: éste es el Diablo.[253]

The Convent Community

A great part of Sebastiana's fear of the terrible noises in the choir is due to the fact that the rest of the community will know about her activities if they hear such strange goings-on. The demonic torments are certainly very personal tests of her courage but the risk of publicity that they also imply causes great anxiety. Sebastiana's behaviour sets her apart from the community and, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, quietist or reformist behaviour often led to direct conflict within the religious community. In Chapters 1. and 2., this was analysed as being due in part to conflicting narrative strategies in plots which tried to exalt the individual while writing the history of a group of individuals. In the letters, the individual history is much more immediate and present, but the need to represent difference (as both greater virtue and patient endurance) remains and is again articulated in terms of conflict between the individual and the communal.

This conflict is revealed very obviously in the repetition of Sebastiana's worry that the silent prayer she indulges in is preventing her from living a fully communal lifestyle and is alienating her from the rest of the convent:

> *... suelo hallarme con todas muy extraña y la pena de verme ligada del modelo de este convento que volando me pusiera, donde antes estaba por orden común.*[254]

Though the pull between private and communal spirituality manifests itself at the level of practices in the above quotation, it in fact also reveals a much more profound anxiety about religious orthodoxy. Sebastiana expresses this through fear that her activities will bring the convent into disrepute with the ecclesiastical authorities which would most certainly have disapproved of any mystical goings-on. Thus, she berates

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[253] [In a very broad street, there was a water fountain in which some women were washing. The light was very dim. It was as if they had just come from mass. One wore a dark cloak, completely covered by it. She was very tall. I thought she was one of the women I had seen washing and I called her by her name three times. She did not answer me and eventually turned her head in anger and when I saw her terrifying face with a huge pointed nose, I said 'this is the devil'.] L25 f136-7.

[254] [I find that I behave very strangely towards all of them. I am sad that I have come away from the model of this convent and would quickly fly and put myself back where I was before by common order.] L18 f97. Also in L21 f105-107 she complains how after her sleepless nights she finds it impossible to get up in time for matins.

herself for not knowing the convent community better. Her representation of this knowledge as necessarily involving submersion in the convent's sociability and as consisting in chatting to the young girls and other pupils as well as participating in the spiritually dubious social events and parties of convent life, makes clear that in her role of potential hagiographic heroine, she should not even attempt to learn these things. Similar rhetorical acrobacy means she justifies her flight from the company of any of the nuns not as revealing a disdain for the worldliness their society implies (and which the reader cannot help but supply as a motive) but as an irrepressible need to be alone. In the same manner, Sebastiana's declarations of complete humility before the other nuns are an attempt to emphasise the equality in virtue of all the members of the convent (which her previous assertions have effectively compromised) but work instead to set her apart in her glorious desire for abjection.

From Valdés's account of her life, it is apparent that serious negotiation was required to get Sebastiana into San Juan, a convent of Poor Clares living under Franciscan rules, and there was a long period of waiting for a suitable patron to appear with a dowry. Her relationship with the convent hierarchy may be influenced by these factors which show how permeable the cloister was to the economic realities of the outside world and how these were translated into differences which inflect the hagiographic conventions with a moral and ethical tone. Although the cloister should ideally represent the disappearance of social, racial and class boundaries, the letters make clear the impossibility of achieving this. The tensions through which the 'self' must make itself present in the narrative of convent life, are very apparent here. We are left with an image of a radically fractured community, a splintering that is absolutely necessary if the individual nun is to write herself into an account of her life:

> *Doy principio con lo que me manda la Sta. Obediencia que presto, y al pie de la letra deseo ejecutar, sino fuera tonta, que apenas acierto como ha de ser; y por tener todas mis cosas aborrecidas; que como sino fuera, quisiera estar olvidada y con mucha razón; que de nada sirvo, ni de tantito alivio a la comunidad porque de la celdita al coro no paso a más y a lo sumamente preciso, sin ver ninguna cosa de lo que hacen en el convento de festejos, ni se cómo es todo el convento, y lo preciso con muy poco cuidado sin conocer a las niñas ni mozas, algunas y muy pocas conozco; pero atiendo tan poco, que parece que no estoy en lo que veo, que me quedo, como si no viera nada. Cuando me veo por cosa precisa con las religiosas, y que me hablan, no las entiendo de vergüenza que como no estoy hecha a hablar, estoy como extraña y siempre apresurada, que no puedo sosegar hasta estar sola que me parece se pierde el tiempo, pero conociendo el favor que recibo de que me tengan en su compañía, igualándome en el hábito que traigo y en que me den lo que a todas, para mantenerme; que me alegrara que para mí faltara, por no tener necesidad, que para lo que yo*

merezco de lo que desecharan tuviera bastante. Pero conozco que nada tengo, que el estar en el coro y pisar el convento es gracia y lo agradezco.[255]

In recording the rhetorical difficulty of accounting for her difference in a community where uniform practices signified uniform belief, Sebastiana provides a great deal of information about what life in such a community was like and how it conflicted with the requirements of a more meditative spiritual practice. We are witnesses to an uncensored opinion of how the most basic of demands of living in a community - contact with other members of it - makes individual spiritual activities difficult:

> *Y me veo muy fatigada, por no hallar salida para despegarme de las personas que tanto me atormentan, pues sin voluntad mía he tenido a esta hermana que habrá mas de diez años; y en ellos todo ha sido atormentarme con la continuación de muy graves enfermedades, dándo con ellas bastante trabajo a la Sta. Comunidad y con la necesidad de haber de entrar Padres a ayudarla a bien morir [...] Y lo que padezco con esta enferma es mucho más por ser preciso que esta cruz sea de participantes; y haber de tolerar los diferentes pareceres y disgustos, que me atarantan y no puedo entender cosas de sentimientos, y faltar a la Paz, que es la vida del Alma.*[256]

In the letters, the figuring of the enclosed community as unified whole, impenetrable and complete, proves to be incommensurable with the representational desire to figure the specificity of the subject - Sebastiana - and her individuality. It seems that in order to be holy, Sebastiana has both to be rejected by the community who calls her a *macha continciera* - an argumentative butch woman - and to isolate herself from it in the most absolute way:

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[255] [I will begin what Saintly Obedience requires of me and I want to do it quickly and to the letter, only I am stupid and can hardly accomplish it properly because I hold all my things in great disdain. If they were not so obvious, I would want to be ignored and this would be fitting because I am good for nothing, not even being able to comfort the community just a little bit. I go out from my small cell to the choir only when necessary, without looking around, seeing none of the festivities they have in the convent. I am not even aware of what the convent is like, knowing only those bits that are absolutely necessary and not even those well. Of the little girls and young women, I know only a few. But I pay such little attention that it seems that it is as if I see nothing. When I have to see the nuns for a specific thing and they speak to me, I cannot understand them because I am so embarrassed and not used to speaking. I am like a stranger and always in a great hurry and I cannot calm down until I am alone. But I am aware of the great favour they do me by having me in their company, raising me to the status of their order and that they give me the same things they give everyone else to nourish me. I do not need it all and would be happy were they to give me the left-overs and rubbish. But I know I have nothing of my own and that to be in the choir and to step inside the convent is a gift and I am grateful for it.] L28 f154-5.

[256] [And I am very tired because I cannot find any way to free myself from the people that torment me. Against my wishes, I have had this sister with me for ten years, during which she has tormented me with continual serious illnesses which have also disturbed this saintly community because of the repeated need for priests to come and administer the last rites ... and what I endure with this sick nun is terrible because it is a cross I bear in which many participate. I have to hear different opinions and preferences and I cannot bear these problems of favouritism and preference for they break the Peace which is the true life of the Soul.] L55 f336-37.

No teniendo confianza en ninguna persona, como si hubiera nacido de la hierbas; y así ni padre, ni madre, es como si no los tuviera.[257]

Sebastiana's piety centres on a conception of the self which is absolutely narcissistic in contrast to the selfless community of wives of Christ.[258] In the letters, the very affection such a community can provide endangers the magnificently solitary wish for ascesis and penitence that Sebastiana has:

> *... las dificultades que había porque me cuidaban mucho de que no me desvelara ni hiciera penitencias. Pasé muchas vergüenzas con lo que me decían, y hablaban de mí cosa en este punto.*[259]

This frank account of the cloister as dispersed into conflicting emotions and desires is a representational strategy strikingly different to the cultural fractures of it encountered in the convent chronicles. In the letters, the emphasis is placed on the great passions and dislikes which Sebastiana's individual approach is figured as awakening in the convent:

> *Y al entender de esta persona no había cosa en el convento tan para nada, mentirosa, aulladora, puerca, inútil, engañando para que me tuvieran por Sta. Decíame tanto, que pocas veces me decía mi nombre. Yo le procuraba dar gusto y servirla, sin darme por agraviada, mas no valían mis diligencias para contentarla, con grandes agravios me pagaba el amor que le tengo. No podía reprimir la cólera que le precipitaba ...* [260]

The opening of the convent community that its social character implies leads to very concrete descriptions of practices of the convent and how they involved the physical presence of worldly activities in a place which Sebastiana feels should reject them. The outcry against the relaxation of New Spanish convents is well documented in the period, and the festivities that Sebastiana describes are certainly not amongst the

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257 [Not trusting anyone; as if I had been born in the wilderness; so that it seemed as if I did not have a father or a mother.] L33 f190. The implications of the rejection of family, along with the allusion to the life of the hermit, makes for a powerful assertion of the refusal of any community.

258 There is only one point at which Sebastiana writes of another individual in the community and allows the person described to have a name and, effectively, a 'subjectivity' somewhat approaching her own. This nun is Madre María, a woman who keeps Sebastiana company throughout her pious endeavours and frightening experiences in the choir, obviously a woman pursuing her own spiritual independence: *Madre Maria que me acompañaba en el coro la mitad de la noche que fue muy perseverante en la virtud y muy mortificada.* [Mother Maria, who kept me company in the choir for half of the night and who persevered in virtue and was given to great mortification.] L43 f269.

259 [I experienced many difficulties because they were very caring and mindful that I did not get up and do penitences. I was very embarrassed by what they said to me and the fact that they talked about me in this way.] L7 f56.

260 [And in this person's opinion there was nothing more worthless in the convent: a liar, moaner, dirty, useless, feigning so as to be thought a saint. She would call me so many things, she hardly ever pronounced my name. I tried to please her and serve her without letting it be understood that I was hurt, but my attentions did not please her and she would pay back the love I showed her with great insults, not able to contain the anger that I drove her into.] L55 f339.

most spectacular breaking of monastic rules that can be documented.[261] In her descriptions, Sebastiana not only provides information about these practices, but maps them onto a construction of the self which involves defining her place in relation to them. Once again, the tone is impressively emotive. These abuses break the cloister with sounds, music, jewels. Sebastiana rebuilds it, neither hearing nor seeing the distractions. Her senses are marshalled rhetorically to reconstitute the cloister, ignoring the enormous illogic of describing what is supposedly not perceived:

> *Estando en Betlem hubo grandes funciones, de visitas de Arzobispos y de Virrey; que se aderezaba la casa de curiosas alhajas; de músicas, y graciosas loas y danzas y muchos divertimientos [sic] tan de gusto, que las mejores personas entraban que gustaban de la gracia especial [...]. De todo, nada vi ni oí. Los alborotos, que por esto se ocasionaban, me disgustaban, pero me lo callaba; conociendo que yo estaba como si no estuviera; como inútil, que no servía para estar entre señoras. Poca cuenta se hacia de mí, que para mí era consuelo. Era tan poco lo que miraba; que muchas entraban y estaban bastante tiempo y se salían sin conocerlas, ni saber cosa, que me las mentaban pensando que las hubiera visto, si la precisión de servir algunas pocas enfermas, que a veces me salía sin ver lo que había; muy curiosos aderezos de casas, y me salí sin verlas y muchas cosas se ofrecían.*[262]

The Writing Nun as Subject

The political import of a feminine spirituality like Sebastiana's which expressed itself most eloquently and repeatedly in devotion to the humanity of Christ and in particular to the Passion, cannot thus be taken simply as an expression of a specifically female relation to the Divine, which would in turn reveal the position of women within the Church.[263] This type of analysis of female devotion tends to reinforce the

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[261] Cf. Lavrin (1972).

[262] [While I was in Bethlehem there were great ceremonies, visits by the Archbishops and by the Viceroy. The convent was adorned with elaborate decorations, music and gracious masques, dances and many entertainments. All this was done with such good taste that the most noble people, who appreciated such graciousness, came to the convent. Of all this, I neither heard nor saw a thing. The disturbances which were caused by such things upset me but I said nothing, knowing that I was there as if I did not exist; useless, not serving any purpose amidst these ladies. Little notice was paid me and this was a great comfort. I looked about me so little that many women entered (the convent) and were there for a long period of time and left again without my having known them. They would call them by their names, thinking I had met them, and I did not know them. Sometimes when attending to the sick I would leave (the cell) without having seen any of the rich decorations, I would go having seen nothing and there were many other instances of this.] L22 f117.

[263] Cf. Melquiades Andrés Martín on how the concentration on the 'Humanity of Christ' is indicative of a radical politicisation of religious categories; *El problema Cristológico de la unión de las dos naturalezas en una persona quedó replanteado en el siglo XVI con ocasión del erasmismo, protestantismo, misticismo español y renano-flamenco en relación con las obras interiores y exteriores del cristianismo con lo visible e invisible de la Iglesia.* [The Christological problem of the union of two natures in one person was restated in the sixteenth century thanks to Erasmiansism, Protestantism and the mysticism of Spain and the Low

private/public divide and the analogous female/male dichotomy. I would argue that the concentration of spiritual women on this kind of devotion and their manner of writing about it must be considered as speaking about the outside as well as the inside of the cloister and, in this specific case, as providing invaluable information about the public as well as the private world of the colonies.[264] The importance of building a history for each New Spanish convent has been examined in the previous chapters and Valdés's *vida* with its elaborate frontispiece is testimony to this desire to insert New Spanish exemplars of virtue within a recognisable tradition. In the frontispiece, Sebastiana is depicted sitting at a desk, surrounded by papers and books and with book shelves behind her in an unmistakable reference to how the Doctor of the Church, Sta. Teresa, was represented in this period. This kind of iconographic statement as well as the notice in the preface indicating that the print costs of producing the book were covered by donations from her devotees make clear that however private and personal her spiritual life was, its significance in the colony was perceived in terms of a very public communal fervour.

However, having argued so forcefully for the specificity of Sebastiana's letters and the privileged view of the construction of her spiritual subjectivity that they afford, it becomes imperative to evaluate exactly how this voice escapes the institutions that help form it and wish to profit from it.[265] Luis de Granada's sermon, *De las caídas públicas* is a helpful entry into this project, for it constitutes an attempt by Granada to explain to himself how it was possible that he should have been deceived by a woman's feigned spirituality, a spirituality which would have been constructed in similar ways to Sebastiana's. Granada (1504 - 1588) was possibly the most widely read of the mystical authors of this period. He also generated substantial controversy, his assertion that knowledge of God could only be reached on the paths of contemplation and not the roads of practical religion were considered to have encouraged heretical beliefs such as those held by the *Alumbrados* in Extremadura in the 1570's. His works were

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Countries, in terms of the relation of the private and public works of Christianity to the visible and invisible Church.] In *Los Recogidos: nueva visión de la mística Española 1500-1700* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria, 1975)129.

[264] Here I argue against the kinds of interpretation that would reduce New Spanish nuns' spiritual narratives to the narration of an exclusively 'feminine' and personal history. Cf. Myers (1986)

[265] Cf. Delumeau (1983)348 on the problems excessive spirituality, particularly women's excess, could bring to the good government of religious institutions.

some of the first to be placed on the Index.[266] *De las caídas públicas* was written in response to the Inquisition's condemnation of the nun María de la Visitación. Granada had admired, believed and, most significantly perhaps, written a hagiography of this woman in 1586. Known as 'the nun of Lisbon', María was sentenced to perpetual exile in Brazil having been found guilty of a variety of crimes including feigned sanctity and seditious statements about the Spanish monarchy. María, the prioress of the Dominican convent in Lisbon, had emerged as a holy-woman in the early 1580's and by 1582, after the annexation of Portugal by Spain, she presented herself as mystical supporter of the Portuguese pretender, Don Antonio.

Although a large part of Fray Luis's sermon *De las caídas públicas* is given over to encouraging the general public that they should not let such scandals of feigned sanctity affect their piety and lead them to doubt the assured saints, in the end the text circles around the impossibility of explaining deceit. In a move to ensure minimum honesty and security, Granada dispenses advice that is well within the Spanish misogynist tradition but exceptional in that it is women's spirituality which is linked to independence, desire and the Law:

> *Y así, a éstas como a las casadas, se debe aconsejar que nunca por sus espirituales ejercicios dejen de cumplir con las obligaciones de justicia, que son de obedecer y servir enteramente las mujeres a sus maridos y las hijas a sus padres. Porque siempre lo que es de obligación se ha de anteponer a lo que es de voluntad y devoción.*[267]

Granada's text emphasises that women are bound by law and custom to fulfil a certain role, to subject themselves to this legislation and, in effect, become subjects *through* it. Consequently, this means a spiritual subjectivity is in some sense 'outside' the law for women; it is an illegal subject position. Significantly, its lawlessness is seen to lie in *voluntad* (desire, self will) and *devoción* (devotion). Using this indicator of lawlessness

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[266] See Leonard (1949). Also Teodoro Hampe-Martínez, 'The Diffusion of Books in Colonial Peru: A Study of Private Libraries in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' in *HAHR* 73, no. 2 (1993): 211-233 for information on the availability, despite their being listed on the Index of 1559, of Fray Luis de Granada's works in the New World. Many of the nuns mentioned in the chronicles and *vidas* make reference to their having read the Spanish mystic's books.

[267] [And so to those young women as well as the married ones, I advise that they should never fail to fulfil the obligations of the Law (for the wives this means obedience and service to their husbands from daughters {the same} to their fathers) because of Spiritual Exercises. Because what belongs to duty should always be put before what belongs to will and devotion.] The text of Fray Luis's sermon is reprinted in *Monjas y Beatas Embaucadoras*, Jesús Imirizaldu Ed. (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1977)257. All quotations are from this edition.

in matters of subjectivity, various of Sebastiana's declarations in the letters gain considerable resonance.

For example, the personal nature of access to prayer is emphasised in some passages and is connected to the overwhelming pull of the emotion of desire, something Luis de Granada would no doubt have considered suspect:

> *Y me parecía (cuando muchas lo conocieron) que si se dieran a la oración tuvieran la resolución de dejarlo todo; por el mucho amor que me dió a todo lo bueno, y a la virtud, que no me podía contener en desearla.*[268]

His doubts would have been confirmed in one astonishing passage where Sebastiana's spiritual voice cries out of the letters. This is an exclamation which forces acknowledgement that however constructed a feminine subject was in the period, there was an enormous potential for autonomy in such a project:

> *¡Oh, cómo quisiera ser una santa! Con qué ansias me quisiera ver libre del pesado estorbo del cuerpo y de estos pensamientos mundanos.*[269]

One result of this desire and the purposefulness it also signals is the mastery and authority gained by the spiritual subject. Sebastiana's most daring assertion of herself as a pious nun could thus not be any clearer than in her espousal of an evangelic mission. She sees herself as possessing a knowledge that can be communicated:

> *Con qué ansias desea mi alma infundir esta verdad a todas las gentes y en especial a todas las religiosas, que me dan lástima verlas tan cuidadosas de que no les falten las cosas temporales ...* [270]

The necessary accompaniment to such mastery however is an equally strong sense of self-doubt. This is not as paradoxical as it first appears, for both positions require a defined sense of self to begin with. Thus, Sebastiana's repeated wish for self-destruction can in fact be interpreted as an auto-designation of selfhood. It is certainly often formulated in the language of personal desire and will:

> *... y que no ejecute los deseos que tengo de tirarme por las escaleras y hacerme pedazos [...] en el coro, en el oficio divino, que quisiera tirar el breviario de la fuerza de tanta congoja.*[271]

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[268] [And it seems to me that when many of them know of prayer and if they were to give themselves to it, they would have the strength to give up everything for the immense love of virtue that it inspires. It made me want virtue so much I could not restrain my desire for it.] L13 f83.

[269] [How I wish I were a saint! I desire so much to see myself free of the heavy distraction of this body and of all these worldly thoughts.] L10 f74.

[270] [With what yearning my soul wants to teach this truth to all people. And especially to all nuns. I pity their concern and anxieties about being deprived of temporal things.] L31 f173.

A similarly positive reading can be given to her desire for solitude:

> *Que me atormenta no poder estar en las soledades, entre animales donde sin temor respiraran y volaran mis quejas por los campos.*[272]

Once more, it is the power of emotion that salvages these declarations from pure destructiveness. In the following letter, the strength of Sebastiana's desire for perfection is described so vividly that the rhetoric forces the reader into an illogical concession, assenting to her description of her own stupidity while being constrained to admire the passion and extreme emotion that drives her:

> *... me veo en puntos de perder la paciencia y de hablar disparates y dejarme perder, porque nada me aprovecha; tan furiosa en la rebeldía de todo lo malo que doy bramidos como si fuera el más rabioso bruto, padeciendo penosas ansias que me dejan como una simple.*[273]

The extremity of despair perhaps reaches its climax in Sebastiana's auto-excommunication when she defines herself as unchristian:

> *Quedándome en esta tontera como si no fuera Cristiana, teniendo a imposible que me pueda salvar en este estado tan rematado.*[274]

I would argue that Sebastiana's use of such extreme vocabulary reveals an extraordinary mastery of spiritual politics and, paradoxically, of her own orthodoxy. This self-assuredness is made clear in other passages where her communication with the divine is clearly seen to have enlightened her about what she denominates the profound verities of life itself:

> *Se me a dado tan claro conocimiento del fin de las cosas de esta mortal vida que todos lo saben pero yo me pensé dueña de todas las estimaciones, hermosa con todos los adornos de la naturaleza y riquezas de la tierra, muy conocida y alabada y todo muy al vivo me movió a entender la brevedad con que todo se acaba por mucho que dure. ¿Y de qué sirven las admiraciones de los primores y divertimiento [sic] si en un instante todo se acaba?*[275]

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[271] [and I did not carry out my wishes to throw myself down the stairs and break myself in pieces {...} in the choir, during the divine service, I sometimes want to throw the breviary away from so much shame.] L4 f32.

[272] [I am tormented that it is not possible to be in the wilderness, among animals, where without fear my complaints could breath and fly through the fields.] L5 f38.

[273] [That I am on the verge of losing my patience and saying foolish things and letting myself go, because nothing is of any use to me. The rebellion of all evil things is so strong that I grunt like the most rabid beast and suffer such pitiful anxieties that they leave me like a simpleton.] L37 f221.

[274] [I remained in this state of stupidity as if I were not a Christian, believing it impossible that I should be saved, being in this extreme state.] L60 f358.

[275] [I have been given such a clear understanding of the end of all things in this mortal life, things that everyone knows. But I had thought myself the possessor of all admiration, beautified with all the decorations of nature and wealth of the earth, renown and praised. And I was moved to understand very

The self-assurance that Sebastiana has in her spiritual self is often most visible in her relation to evil and the devil, where she can display her strength without any need for restraint. Her challenge to evil is thus based on the protection God affords her as pious subject:

> *Ya te conozco, anda vete porque no has de sacar provecho de mí, que el Señor que me crió es mi dueño y me defiende, y con su Divino poder no debo temer y estoy sujeta a su Divina voluntad.*[276]

Perhaps the most clear mark of Sebastiana's autonomy may be seen not in relation to God or to the Devil, against whom her spiritual subjectivity is in a sense defined, but in relation to other subjects who are outside this charmed circle and have to negotiate the real consequences of a nun's individuality and freedom in spiritual matters. It is of course the confessors who bear the brunt of this responsibility and Sebastiana's letters devote a large part of their narratives to describing relations with various men. It is in these descriptions that the fears hinted at by Luis de Granada become charged with meaning:

> *... con un enojo con Vuestra Paternidad, como si tuviera la culpa de todo mi mal, estando inocente de lo que me pasaba [...] y así tenía vergüenza, como también el que a Vuestra Paternidad le parecían muy mal mis cosas; y que si yo volviera, ya no había de tener consuelo y que sólo lo preciso diría que lo demás era peligroso. De repente me daba un aborrecimiento a mi Padre de mi alma, que lo quería despreciar con malas palabras. Estaba como un gentil.*[277]

Once again, the rehearsing of this subjectivity is connected to extremes of emotion, in this case so marked that she qualifies her behaviour as that of a gentile. There is almost a sense of the 'world-turned-upside-down' in Sebastiana's writing, a woman giving her opinion of learned men, feeling disgust at their opinions. Here the confessors are pawns in her emotional turmoil, foils which the Devil uses in his personal battle with the nun. From this passage one is able to grasp quickly the potential difficulties the

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vividly that all this ended with extreme brevity, however long it might last. And of what use are admiration, courtly gestures and enjoyment if in an instant all is finished?] L6 f49.

[276] [I already know you, leave because you will get nothing from me. The Lord who brought me up and is my keeper defends me with his Divine power and I need not fear. I am subject to His divine will.] L53 f329.

[277] [with so much anger against my Venerable father as if he were responsible for all my pains, though unaware of all that was happening to me. {...} and so I was ashamed, and also of the fact that my things seemed wicked to Your Grace and if I were to go back to you I would get no consolation and you would say only what was necessary, the rest being dangerous. And suddenly I would feel such disgust for the father of my soul that I would want to insult him with bad words. I was like a gentile.] L26 f146.

spiritual subject, manifest as independent writing nun, could pose for the hierarchical and political organisation of not only the church but of colonial society at large.[278]

The Politics of the Confessional

In lands which had been in the power of idolatry, the possibility of multiple meanings and of ambiguity, was an extremely dangerous importation. This realm of simulation was not quite the inverted world of carnival, but it was certainly one with more movement than was expected of cloisters and confessionals. It is the effect such a mobile situation could have on the relationship between Valdés's book and Sebastiana's letters and in turn what these texts tell about the situation itself, which I will now turn to. Gabriella Zarri gives a very good indication of the kinds of movement that could be expected both at the level of practices and of writing:

> *Nel circuito santità/simulazione anche il ruolo di confessori e inquisitori puó rovesciarsi e divenire speculare: da garante della <vera> santità a complice della finzione, da maestro di spirito a inquisitore, da membro di un apparato disciplinante a iniziato sottoposto a controllo.*[279]

It is the terminal and inerradicable instability in the relation of a male confessor to a saintly nun that is illuminating in this context, for it explains much of the rhetorical maze to be found both in the letters and the book concerning responsibility and truth. In this respect it is instructive to think of the fortunes of María de Jesús Agreda's (1602-1665) book *Mística Ciudad de Dios*, which she claimed had been dictated to her by the Virgin. Valdés actually recommends it as useful spiritual reading matter in his *vida* of Sebastiana, and the book had indeed been used in theological disputes about the Immaculate Conception. However, theological opinion changed drastically over the following years, exemplifying Zarri's description. The book was banned twice in 1681 and then eventually approved by the Spanish Inquisition in 1686 only to be finally demoted on exegetical and historical grounds. During Agreda's failed canonisation process in 1696, it was judged to be the nun's own writing and not to have been divinely dictated. The book was condemned as superstitious by the Sorbonne and by

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[278] Cf. Electa Arenal, 'Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Reclaiming the Mother Tongue' in *Letras Femeninas* 11, no. 1/2 (1985): 3-75.
[279] Zarri Ed. (1991)22.

Bossuet, making clear how hostile the intellectual ecclesiastical environment was to any such female para-mystical excesses.[280]

The caution with which male clergy were called upon to deal with the spiritual experiences of their female charges is certainly apparent in Valdés's use of Sebastiana's letters as a primary source for his writing. The suspicion surrounding false mystics and spiritual women in general was enormous and the Church's desire to regulate the production of such truths evident from Urban VIII's Bulls of 1625 and 1631 that no hagiographies be published of pious persons who had not been officially recognised as such. Nevertheless, the production of strictly-speaking unauthorised *vidas* was prodigious in the period and their reliance on the kind of source Valdés uses was very frequent.[281] His task as the writer of a hagiography is clearly creative, involving the manipulation of these sources as well as others. His description of Sebstiana's childhood, for example, with details of her breast feeding habits and miraculous escapes from accidents is completely absent from her own writings and probably constitutes more of a rhetorical gesture signalling Sebastiana's saintliness than a real account of her early years. A similar hagiographic commonplace reproduced by Valdés and not mentioned by Sebastiana is her conversion during a sermon; a typical piece of propaganda for Tridentine reforms and access to devotion. The sermon inspires Sebastiana to request confession and she spends two hours recounting her sins, deciding to profess at the end of it. Such an elaboration of the narrative denotes how Valdés's relationship to the truth of Sebastiana's writing has less in common with historical notions of the integrity of source material and more with an interpretative approach that is in itself creative. Valdés's concern is for the verisimilar, not so much for the historically accurate, but this should not be interpreted as leaving his writing in a disembodied hagiographic realm. Paradoxically, the constraints involved in preparing a narrative of Sebastiana's life for general public consumption actually leads Valdés to be more factually informative than Sebastiana on occasions. Thus, it is he who supplies the information that Sebastiana's parents were candle makers in order that the reader may make sense of an early miracle where she escapes death by drowning in a pot of

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[280] On the (mis)fortunes of María de Jesús Agreda's book see Mario Rosa, 'Prospero Lambertini tra <regolata devozione> e mistica visionaria' in Zarri Ed. (1991)521-550.

[281] See Luz del Carmen Vallarta, 'Los espacios del encierro: voces sin sonido - José Eugenio Ponce de León y su modelo de mujer religiosa' in *Relaciones*, no. 45 (1990): 33-61 for an account of the production of didactic literature by a male confessor from the writings of women in his spiritual care in New Spain.

molten wax. This information is elided in Sebastiana's account of the miracle, it being assumed the reader of the letter, her confessor, would know her family background.

The description Valdés gives of the spectacular effects of Sebastiana's trances is a good example of the different relationship to truth displayed in the book and in the letters:

> *Estando en ella, salió repentinamente de su cuerpo una llama de fuego, que manteniéndose inmóvil por algún espacio de tiempo, no subía ni bajaba del pecho de la venerable colegiala, hasta que de improviso desapareció.*[282]

This account conforms perfectly to hagiographic tradition but no such description is to be found in Sebastiana's writings where it would constitute an impious assertion of her own sainthood. It remains, however, a licit interpretation of the facts by Valdés. Nevertheless, the interpretative leeway permitted him, is greatly constrained by the theological arguments and doctrines which regulated spirituality and distinguished the false from the true. In the following citation, which forms part of the introduction to the second volume of Sebastiana's *vida*, Valdés rehearses all the qualities Sebastiana's visions have which make them saintly rather than diabolical, in a list which owes much to Gerson's *De Probatione Spiritum*:

> *... en ellas no se encontraran las señas que ponen los místicos, para conocer las diabólicas; antes sí, se verán con la marca que hace persuadir a lo humano que son de Dios. En ninguna de ellas se descubrirá inclinación a la extraordinaria comodidad del cuerpo, o a la delectación camal, sino mucha honestidad en todas. No se hallará perniciosa inquietud, sino suave paz interior como le quedaba en todas. No se descubrirá en ellas dureza o indocilidad sino rendida obediencia y sujeción al dictamen prudente de sus confesores, que es la cláusula más repetida en sus cartas. No se registrarán vacías, sino llenas de misericordia, de amor del prójimo, y de amor de Dios, con los demás ejercicios de virtudes sólidas, sin fingimiento ni simulación alguna, queriendo parecer santa o virtuosa, pues se reputaba por la mas indigna de las criaturas todas del mundo.*[283]

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[282] [While in the trance a flame suddenly flew out of her body, burning steadily for a while, it did not move from the breast of the devout schoolgirl until it unexpectedly disappeared.] José Eugenio Valdés, *Vida Admirable y Penitente de la Venerable Madre Sor Sebastiana Josepha de la SS. Trinidad* (México: Biblioteca Mexicana, 1765) Bk. I Ch. 6.34.

[283] [None of the signs which the mystics name as denoting diabolic intervention will be found in them. Rather, they exhibit all the signs to make human understanding believe them to be from God. In none is there to be found inclinations for excessive bodily comfort or carnal pleasure, rather complete chasteness. They leave her no pernicious desires but gentle inner peace, no hardness or stubbornness but abject obedience and subjection to the prudent judgement of her confessors, this being the most repeated emotion in her letters. They are not empty, but full of mercy, love for her neighbours and love of God. The other solid virtues are also to be found, without dissembling or any simulation whatsoever of wanting to seem a saint or virtuous, for in fact she considered herself to be the most unworthy creature in the universe.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Intro. 131. Cf. Valdés's echo of Gerson's terminology, opposing frivolity and emptiness to solidity and truth: *Approbare enim falsas et illusorias aut frivolas visiones pro veris et solidis revelationibus, quid indignius, quid alienius ab hoc sacro Concilio?* Gerson (1974) vol. 9.179.

The mystical handbooks of the XVth and XVIth centuries, which continued to be the preferred reading of nuns like Sebastiana, shared an anti-intellectual and anti-speculative stance which was increasingly interpreted as posing a great risk to orthodoxy. Already in Sta. Teresa, the division between scholastic theology and a spirituality centred on the personal experience of the divine is apparent in the saint's distinction between confessors who are learned (*letrados*) and those who are inspired and experienced - *experimentados*. Sta. Teresa seeks the approval of the *letrados* for her own spiritual experiences, revealing a respect for theological learning which indicates the power of such individuals and their kind of knowledge had gained within the Church hierarchy.[284] By Sebastiana's time, the confessor who was *experimentado* was something of a rarity. The role of the confessor had instead become one which confined itself to proportioning the theoretical knowledge of a correct spirituality, while his female spiritual charge became the privileged symbol of a correct practice of this regulated devotion. This sexual division of spiritual labour is eloquently set out in Valdés's description of the perfect confessor not as a participant but as a guide:

> *Puesto que los directores sabios y prudentes son los diestros pilotos, que tienen el gobernalle [sic] de estas naves místicas, las almas: son los prácticos, que las encaminan por los canales estrechos de la vida del espíritu: son las centinelas que están vigilando sin pestañear un punto, para descubrir si acometen los enemigos y acudir con las armas a rebatirlos: son los gomecillos, a cuya conducta fían las almas su vida: son los peritos, que en la mar de la mística, bucean las perlas, y margaritas de las virtudes, aprobando las buenas, por de buen origen, y desechando las falsas: son los báculos, las antorchas, y lo son todo, porque todo lo es un sabio director y prudente ministro.*[285]

The relationship between the confessor and confessant was more than the exchange of information and advice between individuals. As Valdés's extravagant metaphors make clear, it had a social resonance which signified in spheres very different from the private one of the confessional. The mulitivalency of the relationship in terms of the power it attributed to the participants also had consequences outside it,

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[284] For a review of St Teresa's relation to theology and theologians see Otger Steggink, 'Teresa de Jesús: mujer y mística ante la teología y los teólogos' in *Carmelus* (1982): 111-129.

[285] [The wise directors are thus able pilots who are in charge of the mystical ship of the soul. They are experienced and can show the way through the straits of the spirit, they are the look-outs who keep watch without batting an eyelid to see if enemies attack and so be able to rebut them. They are the blind person's guide in whom the soul places its life, they are the sailors who in the mystical sea dive for pearls and daisies of virtue, identifying the good by their true origin and discarding the bad. They are the walking stick, the light, they are everything because a wise spiritual director and prudent minister is everything.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. IX.60.

as the quotation from Zarri earlier on makes clear. Sebastiana and her confessors were involved in a social practice as well as a private one, a fact recorded by the curiosity their goings-on excites in the community Sebastiana lives in:

> *En este tenor de vida, que iba siguiendo nuestra colegiala, pasaron algunos días, que fueron bastantes para que entre las demás con-colegas se excitasen rumores y conversaciones, notando que siguiese el mismo régimen de vida estando sin confesor de asiento, como lo observaban cuando lo tenia, especialmente decían ésto porque comulgaba todos los días.*[286]

The virtuous woman's contacts with her spiritual fathers clearly constituted a site where various kinds of influence and power were negotiated and where, I will argue, the male clergy's desire to control female spirituality reveals something of its own vulnerability. Raymond of Capua's relation to Catherine of Sienna is a keystone for understanding how the dynamic of such relationships worked. It is significant that his *vida* of Catherine was one of the more popular items of hagiographic literature among the nuns of New Spain, many chronicles citing it explicitly. Raymond's respect for Catherine's piety can be taken as an expression of the kind of privileged access to the Divine attributed to women by these learned clergymen.[287] The spiritual women came to be considered by their confessors as 'empty vessels' - mediating agents who, when their status became saintly enough, were transformed into objects of devotion. Clearly, to be responsible for a saintly woman in the role of her confessor became a matter of considerable prestige. The very practical problems that the over-subscription by confessors of such spiritually renowned women could occasion are made evident by Valdés:

> *... este punto de contrariedad de pareceres entre los confesores, que suele ser de los más apretados en que se hallan las almas y lo que más las consterna el ánimo, pues no tienen entonces la seguridad de ocurrir a la guía porque aún éstas se hallan contrarias en los caminos a que quiere cada una conducir a su cliente ...* [288]

The problem of the confessional relation was in essence this; that it was mobile and appeared able to overturn the most sacrosanct of sexually determined roles.

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[286] [There passed several days in this new way of life which our schoolgirl followed (Sebastiana) until her fellow pupils got excited and spread rumours and had conversations commenting on how she followed the same path even when she did not have a regular confessor. They commented particularly on the fact that she took communion each day.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. XVIII.50.

[287] Raymond of Capua, *Vita & Dialogo* (Venice, 1517).

[288] [This disagreement between confessors is one of the most difficult problems a soul can find itself in. It is profoundly disturbing as the soul does not have any trust in the guides, because these all contradict each other about which path to follow, and each wants to lead his client independently.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. XVIII.58-9.

Predictably, it was the sexual and emotional charge of the relation that was held responsible for this mutability.[289] Luis de Granada, who had himself fallen victim to the spiritual charms of María de la Visitación, identifies the danger of the confessional relation lying precisely in this negotiation of influence and power relations which were usually givens, stable categories in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of things. Thus, the very obedience a devout woman gives to her confessor becomes a threat:

> *Otro aviso es contra unas obediencias que suelen dar algunas mujeres devotas a sus padres espirituales. Porque como ellas, por una parte oyen tanto alabar la virtud de la obediencia, y por otra nacen con una inclinación de sujetarse a sus mayores, ambas cosas las inclinan a esta manera de sujeción y obediencia cuando no tienen otros superiores a quienes se sujeten. Y aunque generalmente hablando, toda obediencia sea buena, pero ésta es muy peligrosa, porque de ella nace una familiar amistad entre el penitente y el padre espiritual, la cual suele el demonio poco a poco fomentar y atizar de tal manera que, como Sto. Tomás dice, <muchas veces esta amistad espiritual se transforma y muda en carnal>.*[290]

Valdés is opaque on this delicate matter, but Sebastiana's letters are much more eloquent about the affective ties that bound her to various of her spiritual fathers. She expresses concern that the confessor will behave in an unexpected manner in the confessional and writes that she is upset if she perceives any difference between the attitude she expected and the one he displays.[291] This emotional dependence on the confessor is itself subject to all the doubts which accompany Sebastiana's own spiritual progress. Her comments reveal a very complex way of managing the balance of power in the relationship, at once acknowledging the confessor's superiority while asserting her absolute knowledge of her own soul/self:

> *Me dice Vuestra Paternidad que todo lo sabe y lo entiende, yo lo creo y me pudiera consolar, pero tengo la maldad tan escondida que me parece que mejor lo disimula el amor propio y de todo mi mal yo tengo la culpa y me da lástima el buen corazón de Vuestra Paternidad, que le parece que va bien, quedando esto peor, que de verdad espero se disguste Vuestra Paternidad, y que todo se*

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[289] Peter Brown shows how even Ancient Christian friendships between devout women and priests were the subject of scurrilous speculation, citing the example of Origen's self-castration, an act intended to staunch such rumours. Brown links this both to the concrete economic power widows wielded in the early Church and to the more abstract fear in which femininity, because more 'open', condensed the deep preoccupation of male Christians with their own relations to the World. (1989)153/167.

[290] [Another warning (I give) is against a type of obedience given by some devout women to their spiritual fathers. Because the women hear the virtue of obedience praised so highly and are born with a natural inclination to submit to their superiors that both these things lead them to submit and obey to whoever is their superior. And, though generally speaking obedience is a good thing, this kind can be very dangerous because from it is born an intimate friendship between the penitent and her spiritual father which the Devil can encourage and goad in such a way that, as St Thomas says, 'many times this spiritual friendship is transformed and becomes carnal'] Imirizaldu Ed. (1977)259.

[291] L27 f150.

pierda, y así no hay que tener gusto ni descanso el corazón con todo lo que siente.[292]

From Confessional Letter to Political Hagiography

Sebastiana's narrative of her spiritual life is teleological, guided by the principles of confession and penitence, and forms an experiential story organised around events and their repercussion, either for her personally or for the convent as a whole. In contrast, Valdés's story of her life is a heuristic account, designed to unveil Sebastiana's virtues in a plot where experience is dissected into types and reorganised so as best to serve the ultimate didactic purpose of the work.[293]

Valdés's hagiography is part of an established scholarly tradition of writing the lives of the saints. His book belongs to a type of hagiography very much influenced by humanist criteria and it is the humanist emphasis on rhetoric and its powers of persuasion that is most striking about his work.[294] The massive shift of hagiographic production from oral performance during the liturgy to written texts meant for private consumption did not in any sense entail an abandonment of rhetoric in these works. What happened was that the emphasis on the effect of the text became much more focused. The *vida* as text had to move and instruct an individual rather than a group. Though it is almost certainly true that printed hagiographies would have been read aloud to the convent community, I would argue that the subject being addressed by such texts is still very much an individual: one largely constructed through the penitential, confessional and meditative practices also provided by the church in this period and which have been examined above in Sebastiana's own writing.[295]

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[292] [Your Grace, who knows and understands everything told me this and I believe it and could be consoled by it but I have such evil hidden in my heart that I think my pride hides it. I am wholly responsible and am sorry that Your Grace's good heart should believe that everything is going well when in reality it is worse than ever. I hope Your Grace will get so angry that everything will be given up. I should really have no peace of heart or rest with everything that my heart feels.] L3 f25.

[293] Cf. Claude Martin's reworking of his mother's, Marie de l'Incarnation's, writings into her *vida* for insight into how a woman's unofficial text was transformed by a man into a narrative worthy of publication and the different imperatives which dictated composition in each case. Martin is principally concerned to make Marie's words both doctrinally impeccable, by removing mystical terms, and rhetorically more decorous by updating her antiquated Canadian/colonial French. Zemon Davis (1995)129-132.

[294] See Thomas M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) in particular Ch. IV, 'Rhetoric and Renaissance Humanism'.

[295] Cf. Evelyn Birge Vitz on how the move to a more Humanist hagiography is tied in to the reception of works, the oral/aural meant for a general public, the written for an individual's consultation and perusal. 'From the Oral to the Written in Medieval and Renaissance Saint's Lives' in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, R. Blumenfeld-Kozinski & T. Szell Eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991)97-114.

One of the distinguishing marks of these humanist hagiographies is an attempt to shed any superstitious elements associated with more popular versions of the genre. In general, this meant a valorisation of historical accuracy and a multiplication of learned biblical and classical references in order to place the text within a recognised tradition of legitimate works on the subject. This drive for historical precision in hagiography, however, can be seen as being in conflict with the equally important imperative to inspire devotion. Juan Luis Vives's disapproval of the *Legenda aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine is instructive in this respect. Punning on its title, Vives calls the work *ferrei oris, plumbei cordis* (iron-mouthed and leaden-hearted), criticisms directed not only at the 'folkloric' quality of the historically inaccurate narrative but at its inability to engage or move the reader.[296] For Vives, it was the great classical works of biography - of patricians and generals - which should have served as models for Counter-Reformation hagiography; the resulting *vida* being both elegant and true. Though Vives envisages the recuperation of rhetoric in his ideal hagiography, he also recognises that the power of rhetoric to persuade and move to devotion and virtue (what Voragine's clumsy text does not do) is inextricably linked to its power to lie and to be inaccurate (what Voragine's text does so well).

The correct composition of a hagiographic text is thus clearly a matter of utmost importance. The possibility of the salvation and the redemption of the reader depend upon it. The political and social obligations of hagiography have been explored in detail in Chapters 1. and 2., and Valdés's text also fulfils these requirements. This is most apparent in the representation of Sebastiana's funeral, where an entire chapter is given over to its description. The different musicians, preachers and other participants are all named, these being details which would have been of significance to the contemporary reader. At this point however, it is the genre's metaphysical ambitions that I wish to emphasise in order to examine Valdés's *practice* of this kind of writing.

Valdés shows clearly that he conceives of two different 'orders' of narrative in his life of Sebastiana, one telling the story of her body, the other of her soul. The content of his text, by analogy, is thus divided into two parts; body (the account of facts) and soul (the actions of Grace):

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[296] Juan Luis Vives, *De Tradendis Disciplinis* (Antwerp, 1531) The work was reprinted several times in the seventeenth century. There is an English translation by Foster Watson, *Vives on Education* (Cambridge, 1913).

Por lo que me pareció que ir escribiendo los capítulos del primer libro, no era otra cosa mas que ir organizando el cuerpo de esta Historia, para infundirle la alma [sic] que se halla en este segundo libro. [...] Y como casi desde que se estaba meciendo en la cuna su cuerpo, se dejaron oír en su alma los gorjeos de las virtudes, y las soberanas ilustraciones de la gracia, me ha parecido referirlas todas en este libro, reduciéndolas por su orden a la narrativa.[297]

The task of producing writing that conformed to the correct form was a complicated one, much more so than the almost banal body/soul dichotomy would lead one to believe. Valdés, in writing a Humanist hagiography, entered a series of complex theological debates where each point or interpretation had to be upheld by a learned gloss. This notion of illustrating and explaining a text is analogous to the confessor's role as interpreter of a nun's confession and, indeed, of Valdés's own relation to Sebastiana's writing. His addenda serve to place her in a tradition, both of writing and of saintly predecessors. Valdés is precise about what spiritual methods Sebastiana follows, reproducing the sections of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* which she found most useful. Sebastiana's devotion to this kind of *oración metódica* as it is called by Andrés Martín, is balanced by her reading of Pedro de Alcántara, one of the great exponents of the more contemplative style of prayer whose works were censored in the Index of 1558.[298] In fact, Valdés links Sebastiana not only to Alcántara, but to Catherine of Bologna and to Sta. Teresa, each of whom had come under censure from sections of the ecclesiastical hierarchy which wanted to eradicate any traces of *illuminismo* or *recogimiento* in the saints carried to the altars. The fact that all of her letters also describe her devotion to Loyola's more acceptable spiritual methods saves both Sebastiana and Valdés from the charge of exhibiting a contemplative style *para mujeres de carpinteros* (for the wives of carpenters) as Fernando de Valdés, the composer of the 1558 Index, characterised *recogido* - contemplative - spirituality.[299]

The efforts in Valdés's hagiography to escape the scandalous and exhibitionistic traits associated with pious women and the popular cults they elicited are to be identified throughout the book. Instead of catalogues of *miracula* Valdés give us

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[297] [As I wrote the first chapters of this book it seemed to me that I was but organising the body of this history so as to be able to infuse its soul in this second part. And just as the sounds of virtue and the sovereign gifts of Grace were audible in her soul ever since her body rocked in the cradle, so it has seemed fitting to me to recount them all in this book, putting them in narrative order.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II. Intro. 132.

[298] See Andrés Martín (1975). For Sebastiana's devotion for Loyola see especially Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. XVIII and for her reading of Alcántara Bk. II Ch. I & XVII.

[299] Quoted in Bataillon (1966)702.

learned disquisitions about the theory of penitence, the power of diabolic visions and, most bizarre of all, the possible volume of the angelic voices Sebastiana hears.[300] As is usual in the lives of saintly women, eucharistic miracles and visions are the most theologically delicate to recount, because of the implicit threat they constitute to the priest's privileged relation to God. Hence Valdés's caution:

> *Y no es que real y verdaderamente estuviese en su interior el Divinísimo Sacramento, como colocadas en su pecho las Sacramentales Especies, sino que estuvo la Custodia en su interior en cuanto a la representación e inteligencia; comunicando a su alma maravillosos favores y frutos, de los que comunica este Pan de los Ángeles a las almas que con la debida pureza y ajustada intención lo reciben.*[301]

Adherence to the genre's tradition is thus taken as signifying the orthodoxy of the events described in the *vida*. Hagiography provided a canon of authoritative texts, to whose repetitive structure and formal characteristics Valdés often appeals in order to substantiate the content of his own writing:

> *De esta especie de conversiones abundan tanto las Historias de siervos de Dios, que rara Vida hay en que no se registre alguna o algunas que ha obrado la excelsa Diestra del Altísimo ...* [302]

The kind of theological problems Valdés had to confront as a writer even in this matter of form make apparent that the stakes of orthodoxy were as high on this structural level as they were in that of content. Valdés has to justify the very ordering of his narrative so as ensure the insertion of the *vida* into the orthodox tradition of hagiographies:

> *Haber tratado en los primeros capítulos de los votos substanciales de religión, y después de las virtudes teologales en los posteriores; no ha sido romper el lazo encarnado con que galanamente unidas se estrechan las virtudes, o mudar el orden que tienen entre sí, como dimanadas unas de las otras, sino atender a la*

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[300] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XXI,-XXIV & XXVI respectively.

[301] [And it is not that the Divine Sacrament was really inside her, placed in her breast like the Divine Spices, but that the Custody was represented inside her. This Angelic Bread gave her soul the marvellous fruits and favours that it provides souls who receive it with enough purity and good intentions.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XXV.348-9. In this respect it is interesting to consider Luis de Granada's association of the Eucharist with the feminine in *De las caídas públicas* and how he considers women as especially vulnerable to suggestion in this matter because of what he calls the sacrament's 'theatrical' nature (the fact that it was received in public): *Y dígolo porque no sé qué plaga es ésta que siendo este divino sacramento el mayor tesoro y mayor beneficio que después de la Sagrada Pasión se ha hecho al mundo, la mujeres parece que se han alzado con él; porque a muy pocos hombres vemos frequentar este misterio.* [And I mention it because I do not know what kind of plague this is, that this divine sacrament which is the greatest treasure and most valuable grace that has been given to the world after that of the Sacred Passion should have been taken over by women (literally 'women have risen up with it') because we see few men attending this mystery.] Imirizaldu Ed. (1977)238.

[302] [Books of the servants of God abound in this kind of conversion, so much so that it is a rare saintly Life in which God's working of one or other (of these conversions) will not be narrated.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch.XIII.99.

obligación del sujeto de quien se escriben, que fué la venerable sierva Sebastiana... [303]

Interestingly, it is Sebastiana's status as a subject which disturbs the rhetorical field of vision, but before we can recuperate Valdés as a historian attentive to his subject's 'subjectivity', this concept of subjectivity itself must be questioned. Though Sebastiana's experience as a spiritual individual causes distortions in the classical narrative structure, this does not mean that it is her 'real' experience which is being represented. Perhaps the most obvious example of how 'Sebastiana' is constructed in Valdés's text is the entire chapter given over to the practices surrounding her consumption of food. References to food abstention can, as has been demonstrated, be found in the letters written by Sebastiana herself. Here, however, they figure chronologically, dictated by specific meditative or penitential practices connected either to the ecclesiastical calendar, saint's days or particular devotions she holds, and not as part of a concerted attempt to achieve beatification. It is of course precisely this difference of emphasis and structure between manuscript letter and printed hagiography which I have sought to highlight.

Valdés's organisation of the material for purposes different from a purely documentary account of the nun's eating habits becomes very clear when he summons the reader imperatively in the text:

> *Considérelo bien el lector, que a la verdad, sólo el leerlo causa grima. Pero con estos alimentos y semejantes viandas se gana el cielo, no con regalados banquetes ni con opiparas mesas. Esto, y mucho más ejecutan los santos para entrar en la gloria, y dudan mucho el conseguirla. Y nosotros, que con nuestra tibieza, ni aún pensamos imitarlos, parece tenemos muy seguro el cielo. ¡Oh ceguedad de nuestra misera esclavitud! ¡Oh engaños del amor propio! ¡Oh tibieza de nuestras costumbres!*[304]

The didactic intention makes manifest how Valdés's task, caught between that of the conscientious historian and the effective preacher, often leads him into making statements which attempt to justify his manner of proceeding. In the prologue to the

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[303] [To have dealt with the principal religious vows in the first chapters and with the theological virtues in the later ones, has not implied breaking the incarnate link which beautifully joins these virtues, or to have disturbed the internal hierarchy which flows from one to another, but only to have respected the subject of this history, (who is) the venerable servant of God, Sebastiana] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XVI.258.

[304] [Mark well reader, that only reading of such things causes disgust. But with such foods and dishes is Heaven won, not with indulgent banquets or magnificent meals. Saints do this much and more to enter glory and even then they doubt their success. And we, with our lack of fervour, we do not even think to imitate them (and yet believe) we have won heaven. Oh the blindness of our miserable enslavement! Oh the deceit of self-love! Oh the apathy of our habits!] Valdés (1765) Bk. II 328.

vida, he emphasises the truth of his account by stressing the trouble he has gone to to find accurate sources as well as the reasonableness of his approach:

> *... y te aseguro que lo que he escrito y relacionado es lo que he hallado con mayor contestación, y con más verdad averiguado, después de haber puesto las diligencias racionales que me parecieron más prudentes.*[305]

To a great extent, Valdés's claims to truth are substantiated by his use of Sebastiana's own writings as primary sources for his own. In this primordial sense at least, his book does not efface Sebastiana's letters, but rather presents itself as a kind of commentary on the truth they enclose. Thus, Sebastiana's vision of hell in her twenty-fourth letter is reproduced in its entirety by him:

> *Y porque la carta, en que la refiere contiene admirable enseñanza y documentos, quiero trasladar sus palabras.*[306]

Valdés's reliance on Sebastiana's written testimony as truth comes across even more dramatically when he rests his case for her abject humility on the entire corpus of letters, written to fulfil the vow of obedience. Their very existence annuls his need to convince the reader any further:

> *Los sesenta argumentos que ofrezco son otras tantas cartas que escribió a sus confesores. Porque cada una de ellas es prueba de su humildad. No puedo dar testimonio más cierto que ellas mismas. Leerlas y admirarse de su abatimiento, todo es uno; porque no puede ser menos que admirarse el leerlas.*[307]

This exaltation of a woman's writing as source of truth relies however on the writing's simplicity and innocence. Valdés's comment on Sebastiana's verse is indicative of an attitude to female spiritual writing that valorised it only in so far as it remained the inscription of the woman's *docta ignorantia*. He cites from her poetry, making clear that he includes it not for its artistic merit but for its sincerity:

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305 [And I assure you that what I have written and told I have investigated thoroughly and have had certified as truthfully as possible, after having gone through all the rational procedures which seemed most prudent to me.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I. 1.

306 [And because the letter in which she tells (the vision) contains admirable teachings and information, I want to transcribe her words.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XX.295.

307 [The sixty arguments which I offer are nothing other than the letters she wrote to her confessors. Because each one is proof of her humility. I cannot give truer testimony than them. To read them is to admire her abjection, in fact it is one and the same act, for to read them is to be filled with wonder] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XXII.307.

no por lo numeroso y medido de ellos, sino por los conceptos de amor y ternuras de devoción que exhalan; pues de ésto tienen mucho, y de aquello nada, como dictados solamente de la sencillez y del afecto.[308]

Valdés's approbation of Sebastiana's writing must thus be understood as in some sense depending on Sebastiana's own declared aversion to it. Hence the relish with which her apprehension is described and linked to the extraordinary penitential practices she also undertook. Writing in this context signals absolute submission to Divine Will and the pain and suffering it causes are a guarantee of the (female) writing subject's authenticity:

Fué este precepto un cordel que la apretaba la alma [sic], el corazón, y la vida, más que si la tendieran en una canasta para quitarle, a rigor de tormentos, la vida: y más quisiera el ecúleo, para que fuese martirizado su cuerpo, que la pluma para expresar cosas de su alma; primero hubiera elegido las apreturas de la prensa, y los tormentos del tórculo, que el papel, y la tinta, para referir lo que pasaba en su espíritu, porque era inexplicable el dolor que la atravesaba, el considerar que su misma pluma había de sacar a lo exterior aquello que aún le costaba mucho decir a sus confesores, y que saliese afuera lo que pensaba quedaría siempre sepultado en los rincones de su pecho y muy cubierto con las telas de su corazón.[309]

Sebastiana's fears about the move into the public that the passage into writing implies is reproduced by Valdés, and it is interesting that he should use images that recall resurrection and unveiling; both being symbolically rejected by the encloistered nun on her profession, who declares herself dead to the world when taking the veil. Paradoxically it is Sebastiana's spirituality which takes her out of the cloister into the world. And it is precisely the public nature of such a spirituality that makes it such a menace in the world. Of this fact, Luis de Granada was only too aware, for as he writes in *De las caídas públicas*, the world is quick to be deceived and then disappointed by such displays of piety:

Mas, entre los malos ejemplos que se ofrecen en la vida humana, el más dañoso es cuando una persona, tenida en gran reputación de santidad, viene a caer en

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308 [Not because of their quantity and decorum, but for the notions of love and tender devotions that they show, because of the former they have nothing and of the latter very much, being inspired only by simplicity and affection.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XIII.241.

309 [This order (to write) was a rope that constricted her heart and life, more than if they had put her in a cage to kill her by tortures. She would have preferred the instrument of torture with which to martirize her body than the pen to express the things of her soul. She would have rather chosen the embraces of the rack and the torments of the press than paper or ink with which to narrate what happened in her spirit. The pain that she felt was inexpressible when she thought that her very pen would bring to the exterior all the things it was difficult for her to say even to her confessors and that what she thought would always remain buried in the depths of her breast and hidden by the veils of her heart should come out into the open.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. X.68.

algún pecado. Porque aquí es donde los buenos lloran y los malos ríen y los flacos desmayan y, finalmente, casi todos se escandalizan y pierden el crédito de la virtud de los buenos.[310]

Granada does not place the blame solely on false saints but acknowledges that such pious women can in fact be the victims of a popular desire to see miracles and to witness divine events:

> *Y entendiendo ellas estas caridades se les hacen por el olor a la virtud, a veces procuran de parecer más santas de lo que son, aún de contar algunas revelaciones y favores de Dios; y por aquí halla el demonio entrada para pervertirlas y engañarlas.*[311]

What is immediately clear is that as soon as feminine spirituality is placed in the sphere of the worldly, when it is expressed either vocally or in written form in confession, or promoted by interested clergymen, it also enters the world of semblance. This world of seeming, a veritable theatre of virtue, is one with a host of feminine associations all of which make it seem an impossible task to rescue any pious woman from the kinds of judgement expressed by the New Spanish Inquisition in 1537 about an instance of feigned sanctity:

> *... en esta tragicomedia no haya otra cosa que tramoya y aparato de virtud, y el asco y fetidad [sic] de la lujuria de esta mujer [...] tiene más amor propio que una beata.*[312]

This constellation of accusations is completely damning; femininity, sexuality, semblance and self-love. Valdés's distinction between historical sources as guarantees for external events and Sebastiana's spiritual letters as a legitimate source of internal truths must then be considered in this context of the Church's attempts to professionalize the writing of hagiography, removing it from the dangers of semblance. Valdés himself is at pains to sever any connection linking his composition with the disreputable mystical and superstitious traditions:

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[310] [Amongst the worst examples that humanity can be offered, the most damaging is when a person who was reputed a saint commits some sin. Here all the good begin crying, the bad laughing and the weak feel weaker and everyone is scandalised and the good lose all their virtuous credit.] Imirizaldu Ed.(1977)202.

[311] [And the women understand this charity is shown towards them because of their reputed saintliness and so they sometimes try to seem more saintly than they are, even recounting some revelations and Divine favours. It is here that the Devil finds a way to deceive and pervert them.] Imirizaldu Ed.(1977)262.

[312] [In this tragicomedy there is nothing but appearance and the staging of virtue, as well as the rottenness and disgusting lust of this woman. She has more self-love than a *beata*.] Quoted in María Agueda Méndez, 'Ilusas y alumbradas; ¿Discurso místico o erótico?' in *CMHLB Caravelle* no. 52 (1989):5-15.14.

Para [...] cosas exteriores [...] el fundamento racional y prudente que se puede solicitar para dar el crédito y fe humana que a semejantes escritos se da. Y para las cosas interiores de que sólo Dios y sus confesores fueron testigos, nos han servido los manuscritos, que por obediencia formó la Venerable Madre, siendo éste el estilo que en casos semejantes sigue la práctica para escribir vidas de siervos de Dios, afianzando la verdad de los sucesos en la deposición que hacen las mismas personas.[313]

It is interesting that the opposition external/internal should also appear to be that of reason/subjectivity. The truth of the spiritual experiences Sebastiana recounts in her letters rests firmly on her status as 'Sebastiana', while the truth of their effect (manifest in the form of miracles etc.) rests on prudence and reason. It is this play between two truths, the truth of reason and prudence and that of subjective experience, which makes Valdés's relation to his source and his subject (Sebastiana), much richer and more complex than the various acceptable misogynist stances which are taken up in the hagiography would seem to indicate.

Valdés's prejudices, ones not particularly remarkable for the period, centre on the sociability of women and the problems this poses for their enclosure;

Como había en el colegio muchas, y todas mujeres, era preciso que entre tantas no faltasen algunas mal acondicionadas.[314]

and again;

Porque como por mujer y por niña, había de ser dos veces curiosa y amiga de ver.[315]

They also extend to a gendering of the religious virtues he writes about. This Valdés achieves through a scaling-down of the spiritual language usual in these narratives, a diminution that mimics Sebastiana's own humility and genders it as specifically feminine, while constituting an accomplished rhetorical figure in itself. After exclaiming over Sebastiana's prudence and restraint in using the same piece of coal for cooking for the past ten years, he adds:

¡Que buena cocinera! Si de éstas hubiera algunas, qué apetecibles fueran las cocineras. Pero la desgracia es que gastan mucho y después de ser crecido el

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[313] [For external things in the writings; the rational and prudent belief that can be asked from credence and good faith. And for internal things of which only God and her confessors were witness, we have used the manuscripts which the Venerable Sister wrote out of obedience. This is the usual way in which to write about the servants of God in similar cases, placing trust in the truth of the events retold by the persons themselves.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. XVIII.66.

[314] [As there were many people in the school, and all of them women, it is not surprising that there were some unfit ones.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. XI.81.

[315] [As a woman and a young girl at that, she would be doubly disposed to be curious and fond of looking.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. III.18.

gasto, es muy escasa y muy poca la medra. ¿A dónde iremos por cocineras con estas gracias?[316]

Similarly, Valdés describes how Sebastiana's sanctity is inscribed on her female body in a manner that overflows her letters - which are the product of her intellect and reason. This kind of description indicates the complexity of the male compiler's relation to his female subject. It at once repeats fears of promiscuity and sociability while exalting the femininity they denote. This femininity is figured as voice and body, as a surplus to the text which, by its very excess signifies profound and holy zeal:

> *Y en muchas de sus cartas, aunque vaya tratando de puntos diversos, prorrumpe en semejantes exclamaciones; porque su celo todo fuego, por todas partes brotaba sin contenerse en su pecho [...] salía por las márgenes de sus ojos, labios y manos, encrucijada éstas en ademán de quien rendidamente suplica, llenas de lágrimas sus mejillas, y rebozando tiernas palabras su boca.*[317]

On occasions, this stance leads Valdés to mount an emphatic defence of women's spiritual experience:

> *la material [sic] de los capítulos se reduce a varias visiones, revelaciones, beneficios y mercedes divinas [...] y son innumerables los que sin más fundamento que el ser mujeres quienes tienen las revelaciones, luego luego las condenan por falsas, dándolas por engañosas o ilusorias.*[318]

Nevertheless, he characterises his own writing practice as showing restraint in its narration of the visions and miracles of women. When briefly describing a vision of the Virgin squeezing Sebastiana's heart, he interprets this rhetorical decorum as indicative of how serious a historian he is, distinguishing his work from the collections of *miracula* which had given earlier hagiographies such a disreputable name:

> *No tuvo especial inteligencia de lo que en ésto quería hacer la Majestad Divina. Ni toca a mi instituto avenguarlo, sino sólo referirlo. Porque si me fuera lícito, sin*

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316 [What a good cook! If there were more of these how tasty cooks would be. But the shame is that they spend a lot and then when the debt is enormous the gain is small and unsatisfactory. Where will we go to find cooks with these graces?] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. VI.180.

317 [And in some letters, though she may be writing about something else, she breaks out into similar exclamations, because her zeal is fiery and lights up everywhere, not staying within her breast {...} {it} would come out of the margins of her eyes, mouth and hands. She would cross her hands in the gesture of someone who begs abjectly, her cheeks stained with tears and her mouth overflowing with tender words.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XII.229/231.

318 [The subject matter of these chapters can be summed up as consisting in various visions, revelations, graces and divine gifts. And there are innumerable people who would dismiss these revelations, hastily condemning them as false, calling them deceitful and illusory, only because they were experienced by a woman.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Intro. 126.

exceder los limites de puro Historiador, apurar misterios e inteligencias aunque fatigara un poco un tal cual discurso, no me sería muy arduo encontrarlas.... [319]

The stakes of attributing truth to a woman's writings are clearly inserted in a complex network of doctrinal and cultural attitudes towards the feminine. Not surprisingly, Valdés most emphatic defence of his own truth depends on valorising his work as that of a faithful historian rather than relying completely on the content of his sources, or, for that matter, on their author:

Lo que aconteció a la Madre Sebastiana no sé si fué milagro, o prodigio, refiérolo como consta de los instrumentos que tengo en mi poder.[320]

This solution is very much an interim one that works within the confines of the *vida* as a book, but Valdés's role as confessor and preacher means that the notion of truth in the writing of hagiography will always also refer to the text's effect, to its reception and to its extra-textual life, where it is expected directly to influence other lives. The didactic function of Valdés's writing means the problems of rhetoric and figuration must always be considered from the point of view of reception as well as production, and it is here that the persuasive character of rhetoric and representation in general become most ambiguous. The art of Valdés can both save through persuasion and damn through lying, but it is impossible to have one effect without the other. This doubleness in words cuts against the humanist optimism that Ciceronian civility might indeed repair the ravages of the Fall.[321] Valdés catches something of the poignancy of this aspect of his own writing enterprise when he describes the effect of penitence on

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[319] [She did not particularly know what the Divine Majesty meant by such a thing. And it is not my place to find it out, only to narrate it. Because if it were licit for me to do so, without exceeding the limits placed on a true Historian, I could multiply instances of mysteries and revelations. Even though such a narrative might be boring it certainly would not be difficult for me to find the examples.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XXIV.359-60. This characterisation of the prodigious discourse associated with *miracula* is reminiscent of Michel de Certeau's own description of History's 'battle' against fiction where fiction is *métaphorique [...] elle se meut, insaisissable [...] elle désigne une dérive sémantique.* In *Histoire et Psychanalyse, entre science et fiction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987)69.

[320] [I do not know if what happened to Mother Sebastiana was miraculous or prodigious. I only narrate it as it appears in the documents I have in my power.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XXIX.386. Cf. Valdés censure of the two types of confessor, one accepting of mysticism the other sceptical and his advocation of a 'reasonable' middle path to be taken by Confessors Bk. II Intro. 129.

[321] For an examination of how rhetoric complicates devotion see Arrasse (1981)136-47. Cf. especially how the cult of the image turns into the reverence accorded to the cultivated image in this period: *Du moment que l'image acquiert une gloire spécifique due au savoir-faire d'un artiste désormais cultivé, le faire croire qui y travaille acquiert une ambiguïté riche, certes, des condensations diverses qu'elle autorise, mais aussi des contradictions, éventuelles par rapport à la finalité proprement dévote du message figuratif.* (146).

Sebastiana in therapeutic terms, distancing it from anything that could be found written in a book:

> *... son tan particulares efectos, que ya se alegraría mucho la medicina de conocerlos bien para aplicar en tiempo medicamento tan fácil; pero como no se hallan aforismos ni recetas para ésto en la medicina de Esculapio ni la de Hypocrates o Galeno, no todos saben aplicarlos. Estas medicinas se hallan solamente en los tratados del amor de Dios, en los libros de la caridad, y en las cátedras de la penitencia.*[322]

Though any didactic project may seek to be as precise and accurate as medicine, its effects escape any such general therapeutic truth which seeks to be applicable to all ailments. It is clear that the power to 'make believe' displayed by books such as that of Valdés, could slip dangerously into a power of 'make-belief'. Valdés resists this degradation of the didactic enterprise using the metaphor of other mimetic practices. He thus expresses disdain for painting and valorises sculpture - a distinction which attempts to distance the effects of his own didactic project from those of pure representation in painting, associating them instead with the more tangible (and violent) mimetic work of sculpture. Thus, the construction of sainthood remains tied to the world, even its destruction of the body, by its very fury, making the representation of saintliness inescapably somatic. The angelic body is the bloody and wounded body of the penitent:

> *Porque no quería ser santa de lienzo que salen formadas con los suaves tientos del pincel, y con la delicadeza de los coloridos, sino santa de escultura, hecha a golpes de la fierra y de la azuela, a heridas del escoplo, a surcos del sormón, a tiranías de la gurbia; y por fin, hacerse pedazos y dividirse toda, para ser Santa a rigores.*[323]

Writing Lives in New Spain

New Spain ostensibly provided the perfect blank page on which to write the evangelical sermon on Spain's Counter-Reformation victory. The XVIIth and XVIIIth

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[322] [The effects are so singular that medicine would be very glad to know them, so as to prescribe such an easy remedy at the right time. But as no rules or prescriptions can be found for this in the medicine of Aesculapius, Hypocrates or Galen, not many (doctors) know how to apply it. This remedy can only be found in the treatises of the love of God, the books of charity and the seminars of penitence.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XXIV.337.

[323] [Because she did not want to be a painted saint, of those that are formed by the soft strokes of the brush and the delicacy of colours, but a sculpted one, made by blows from the iron and the adze, wounds from the chisel, scratches from the scalpel, pains from the scorper, until finally, shattering herself into pieces and fracturing herself completely, she would be a saint made through suffering.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. XVI.115.

centuries were those of the *exemplum* and it is arguable that these didactic elements in books, sermons and private writing provide a unique insight into a historic reality which we have little access to otherwise. These details function not by revealing the truth about a certain reality but by creating an effect of verisimilitude that allows us to interpret how the real was constructed at a particular moment or for a particular situation.[324] Obviously, this construction had to make sense to those who built it as well as to their audience. In the New World, it was precisely this concept of a shared culture, or more broadly a shared humanity (a being-in-the-worldness) that became increasingly difficult to sustain.

The new continent provided incontrovertible evidence of difference at every imaginable level; religious, social, biological. The attempts to understand all these differences usually meant that they were interpreted in ways which made sense to European interpretative codes. In the religious texts produced in the colonies in the period, the Indies often figure as the metaphysical example to end all examples. The New World is both Eden and the place of the Apocalypse; an attitude perceptible in the Franciscan order's millenarian enthusiasm to convert the Indians. The New World is thus paradoxically a hyper-fertile ground for evangelisation and the end of all such projects. I would argue that the paradox arises because of the intellectual difficulty of making sense of the extraordinariness of the new continent, a land whose strangeness had to be both acknowledged and erased.

The perception of the New World is thus rallied contradictorily in these narratives in order to *confirm* the orthodoxy of practices and persons described. Its construction for this purpose, however, is not completely smooth; the fabricated New World overflows its borders, overpasses its function and reveals details that are incidental to the process of exemplarity, of setting-off orthodoxy, but which are instead charged with an autonomy that can be taken as signalling the presence of the real differences America presented.[325]

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[324] Jaques Berlioz's comments on the function of *exempla* are particularly pertinent: *Or cette vraisemblance que désirent tous les praticiens de l'exemplum n'est-elle pas inscrite dans le rapport entre les textes exemplaires - empruntés généralement à la culture dite savante - à un autre texte diffus et souvent impénétrable: <l'opinion publique> le consensus*. in '<Quand dire c'est faire dire>, exempla et confession chez Etienne de Bourbon'. in *Faire Croire: modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XII au XV siècle* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1981)299-335.335.

[325] For another approach to this 'specificity effect' as I will call it, see Pagden (1993)184: "For however much we may, indeed, fabricate rather than find our counter-image, we do not fabricate it out of nothing.

To return to the absent reader, I would also argue that the audience Sebastiana and Valdés address is a specifically New Spanish one. In Valdés's case in particular, it is not impossible that he would have been aware of Bernardino de Laredo's conflation of the spiritual expansion of the soul through the new meditative spirituality with the expansion of Spain's empire.[326] In his influential study of Spanish spirituality in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Melquíades Andrés Martín's interpretation of this is a radical one: that the subjectivity these spiritual texts created was inextricably linked to the social and spiritual needs of the period:

> *La oración mental responde mejor a las exigencias socio-espirituales de la época. Quien viajase a América o a Europa, dilacerada e insegura, o trabajase de modo incansable en la predicación y en labores de reforma, necesitaba convicciones personales sólidas, basadas en el ejercicio reiterado del conocimiento propio y del amor de Dios.*[327]

The reader is charged with the responsibility of using the text well and this is highlighted by Valdés's insistence that some actions described are to be admired rather than imitated; the pious robbery Sebastiana commits on behalf of someone else being a case in point.[328] The book and the life of the holy individual recounted in it serves the reader as a kind of bridge; a mediating structure between earth and heaven. If saintly individuals like Sebastiana transcend historical time by becoming one with Christ, each act of transcendence remains rooted in earthly reality. Contact with the saints is achieved by means of the physical and expressed preferentially in terms of *exemplae*. These physical aspects of the process of mediation which joins the saintly individuals to their admirers can best be illustrated by reference to the role of purgatory in these writings. The conception of purgatory, as has been argued by le Goff, significantly modified categories of space and time in the Christian imagination.[329] It was thus also of huge political consequence:

> *Quel accroissement de puissance pour les vivants que cette prise sur la mort! Mais aussi, dés ici-bas, quel renforcement de la cohésion des communautés -*

We cannot think counter-factually about less than whole worlds. Similarly, we cannot imagine possible, if factual, worlds with no cultural specificity.".

[326] This is glossed by Andrés Martín as, *el alma se magnifica y ensancha y engrandece, según Laredo, a la vez que Castilla y España se ensancha en América y en Europa.* [According to Laredo, the soul expands at the same rate as Castille and Spain in Europe and America.] Andrés Martín (1975)205.

[327] [Interior prayer responded to the socio-spiritual needs of the period. Whoever travelled to America or Europe, itself fractured and unsafe, or worked indefatigably in the labour of preaching or reform, needed solid personal convictions, based on the repeated exercise of self-knowledge and on the love of God.] Andrés Martín (1975)380.

[328] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XXVI.352. The robbery itself is narrated in Bk. I Ch. XII.

[329] See Jaques le Goff, *La Naissance du Purgatoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).

familles charnelles, familles artificielles, religieuses ou confraternelles - quel extension après la mort de solidarités efficaces! Et pour l'Église, quel instrument de pouvoir! [330]

The various chapters of Sebastiana's *vida* which are given over to her charitable actions towards the souls in purgatory and which are full of stories of the minor and major sins that have led these souls to 'the third place', can thus be understood as a political tool, enforcing social as well as religious orthodoxies. This connection between government and the construction of orthodox and politically valuable subjects through spiritual means may be examined in more detail by turning to the cultural context of Valdés's *vida* of Sebastiana and how the book manages its New World setting.

By the time Valdés's came to write, female convent communities were well established in the New World. The exportation of nuns from the peninsula was complete and the issues of acculturation became more focused on consolidation rather than implantation. In the case of convents and their inhabitants, this consolidation was principally expressed through the purity of the community - through its resistance to the host of circumstances in the New World (the lure of the native) which posed a threat to religious and cultural orthodoxy. For the expatriated peninsular nuns in New Spain, and even more dramatically for the *criollo* nuns, context became an inescapable problem. These nuns had to remain in what was a hostile context (and in the case of the *criollas* a hostile cultural and biological destiny) and resist it.

The only remaining convent for 'pure' Indian women in Sebastiana's life-time was Corpus Christi and its foundation is studied in Chapter 5. It is important to point out here however that this institution was reserved for noble Indian women, *hijas de caciques*, and its entry requirements illustrate clearly the contemporary fear of the mixing of races which was perceived as endemic in the colonies. The attempts to separate the races in New Spain are clear from a variety of legislation; sumptuary laws, regulations which carved the cities into racially demarcated zones and determined the membership of guilds etc.. These were not always designed in favour of the Spaniards and *Criollos* (the Franciscan order, for example, kept the Indians away from both because of fears for the latter's innocence) but they were always predicated on the

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[330] [What an enormous gain of power for the living that such a hold on death gave them! But also, from down here upwards, what a confirmation of the unity of communities - carnal families, artificial ones, religious or confraternal ones - what an extension after death of existing solidarities! And for the Church, what an instrument of power!] Le Goff (1981)24.

belief that racial and cultural purity should be guarded. When at one point in her career Sebastiana is placed in the convent of Corpus Christi because no other convent can be found that will accept her, Valdés describes the reaction of the *cazique* nuns very much in terms of the encroachment of a territory designated specifically for them. There was already a history of Indian institutions of this kind being eroded by the power of the Spanish authorities and so the reaction of the *cazique* nuns is interpreted by Valdés as a natural resistance to a heterogeneity which will make their institution lose its particularity, and thereby its power:

> *... no querían recibir Españolas, por los temores en que se hallaban de quedar sin este convento, como se habían quedado sin otro que se fundó en esta ciudad con el mismo destino, de que fuese solo para Indias, y por admitir en él a las Españolas, fueron éstas poco a poco apoderándose de él hasta quedar solas, y no admitir, como no han admitido, más Indias ...* [331]

Valdés's anxiety about the loss of purity and its seeming inescapability in the New World context is a recurrent theme in Sebastiana's *vida*. The convent school she first attends is praised by him precisely for having adhered to strict segregation, not even allowing the entry of servants:

> *Entran en él las niñas pobres, honestas y de sangre limpia, pues la que no es Española no tiene entrada en esta casa y con ésto se libran de uno de los estorbos que hay para la quietud y sosiego de las conciencias, que lamentan aún los conventos de señoras religiosas, y este estorbo son las criadas que se ven necesitadas de mantener.*[332]

Each convent in New Spain had in some sense to demarcate its territory; racial, financial and spiritual. This worldliness of the cloister and its links to other New Spanish institutions is apparent from Sebastiana's difficulties in finding a convent which will accept her and a patron who will provide a dowry. While awaiting a patron, Sebastiana

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[331] [They did not want to receive Spaniards, due to the fear of losing the convent, just as they had lost another that had been founded in this city with the same purpose of being only for Indians. And because this last had allowed the entry of Spaniards, the latter had slowly taken over the convent until it was completely theirs and they refused to let any more Indian women enter it.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. XV.108.

[332] [Only girls who are poor, honest and of *sangre limpia* enter it. No one who is not Spanish is allowed entry to this convent. By this they free themselves from one of the main disturbances of peace of mind and tranquillity which is so often complained about in convents, this being the presence of servants which the convents are constrained to keep.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. IV.20. It goes without saying that the servants would most probably have been of mixed race. *Limpieza de sangre* had already become a term loaded with cultural and class values in the peninsula and in the New World context its multivalent significations were even more evident. See Carmen Bernand & Serge Gruzinski, *Histoire du Nouveau Monde: les métissages 1550-1640* (Paris: Fayard, 1993) also Jean Paul Zúñiga, *Espagnoles d'outre mer: emigration, reproduction sociale et mentalités à Santiago-du-Chile au XVIIe siècle* (unpublished PhD: European University Institute, 1995).

is taken in by the Viceregal household and is clearly something of a success with the noble women of the court. Her virtue and piety make her a celebrity, but do not guarantee hard cash . When an offer is finally made, it is to place her in the convent of the Brigidines, a very recent foundation at the time, and as a lay nun rather than one of the choir nuns. The strings attached to the dowry are not explained by Valdés, but they allow one to speculate that not even a recognised holy woman could easily find financial support in a society where the interests of the monastic and social élite were so intertwined they permitted very little negotiation.[333]

Sebastiana finally professes in the convent of San Juan de la Penitencia, and it is from here that most of the letters are written. It is her spiritual home and she belongs to it much like its other miraculous images and relics which also serve to mediate between heaven and earth.[334] Sebastiana's holiness thus has a very practical use, and appears to be something of a miracle in this erstwhile land of idolatry. Valdés reproduces the *topoi* of wonder and admiration at the Spanish expansionist mission which has brought such goods to the New World:

> *Aquel Dios, digo, que nace para buenos y malos, ricos y pobres, nobles y plebeyos, no quiso que careciese más tiempo de las místicas luces de su evangelio este Nuevo Mundo, dilatado Imperio Americano ...* [335]

and exclaims over the particularity of this virtuous nun. A 'curiosity' and 'marvel' that could only be found in such a New World:

> *Y en esta suposición, bien podemos gloriamos de que sea México la tierra feliz que ofrece a Dios las primicias de una religiosa perfecta con nombre de Sebastiana, en la que es objeto de esta Historia. Pues quedando no sea la*

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[333] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. XVII for Valdés's condemnation of the patron's conditions. The Brigidine convent was founded by Basque nuns and financed by Basque patrons - clearly there was a strong sense of group identity and solidarity in the convent. Sebastiana does not appear to have had the necessary Basque connections.

[334] Le Goff emphasises the particularly 'feminine' character of this mediation, citing the Virgin and St Lutagard as especially effective mediators for souls in purgatory. The role of the Beguines of Helfta in encouraging this idea of the 'efficacy' of female intervention in matters connected to purgatory is well established and perhaps the greatest exponent of the particularly feminine contribution to be made in freeing souls from 'the third place' is Catherine of Genoa's (1447-1510) treaty on the subject. Le Goff (1981)482-3 On the power such mediation could bring the Beguines see Jo Ann McNamara; " ... by developing their powers to assist the dead, women of limited means and worldly prospects put themselves firmly among society's benefactors and outside the realm of the abject and needy poor.". In 'The Need to Give: Suffering and Female Sanctity in the Middle Ages' in Blumenfeld-Kozinski & Szell Eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991)199-22.214.

[335] [The God who was born for the good and the evil, the rich and the poor, the noble and the peasant, He did not want this New World and huge American Empire to lack the light of the Gospel any longer.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Intro. 2.

primera de quien se escribe la vida en toda la religión seráfica, a lo menos es la primera Sebastiana en las Indias.[336]

At the moment of Sebastiana's death, Valdés manipulates the New Spanish context once more, to report how Sebastiana compared herself, in absolute humility, to Indian women. In these few words however, the *vida* also reveals the misery of the great majority of the Indian colonial female population:

> *¿Y las pobres Indias, cuando están malas, qué ropa les mudan? ¿Qué ropa tienen? Pues ¿por qué quieren ahora que yo me desnude el hábito y me ponga ropa? ¿Qué más tengo yo que las Indias?* [337]

The representation of context in Sebastiana's *vida* alternates between these two insights, one showing how New Spain could be manipulated for political purposes, the other an unveiling of colonial realities almost incidental to the main purpose of the text, but which reveal points of tension or negotiation in the process of acculturation. The multivalent significance which could be attached to things New Spanish is made clear in Valdés's peroration of Mexico City, which succumbs to an image of universality charged with magical elements:

> *En esta ciudad de México; cabeza de este mundo Indiano, emporio de virtud, letras y nobleza, imán de todas las naciones y encanto de los extranjeros ...* [338]

This sort of description of the New World metropolis is something of a commonplace in the period, but its effect is nonetheless stunning. For example, Valdés's description of the images kept in Sebastiana's convent, when considered in relation to this magical quality of the city, becomes inevitably associated with the idolatrous and superstitious practices from which it most wants to distance itself. The Christ child, which the nuns begin by disliking and turn to worshipping after He intervenes miraculously during an earthquake, is described in terms of 'bewitchment' - not an easy category in such a city:

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[336] [And for this we can be proud that Mexico should be such a privileged land, to be able to offer God the very first perfect nun called Sebastiana who is the subject of this history. For though she may not be the first Sebastiana to have her life written, she is certainly the first (of that name) in the Indies.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. I.7.

[337] [And the poor Indian women, when they are ill, what clothes do they change into? Do they have any clothes? Well, why should I now want my Habit changed and new clothes put on? What more do I have than the Indian women?] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. XXII.308.

[338] [Mexico City, the head of the Indian world, agora of virtue, learning and nobility, magnet of all nations and enchantress of all foreigners] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. I.3. The classic text is Bernardo de Balbuena, *Grandeza Mexicana* (1604). On heroic conceptions of Mexico City in general see Bernand & Gruzinski (1993) Ch. VI, 'La Grandeur de Mexico'.

Y ya este Niño es el hechizo de sus afectos, el encanto de sus amores, el dulce Imán de sus cariños y el soberano Adonis de sus voluntades.[339]

Valdés is of course more than aware of the dangers of such words and in his account of another image, the *Niño de la Madre Sebastiana*, which actually belonged to Sebastiana, he attempts to narrate the potentially superstitious while resituating it within the field of the orthodox. The image grows miraculously and Valdés excuses himself from not being able to prove this as he had not measured the image before or after the event. He elides the question of whether it really grew by asserting that the image would be worthy of devotion in any circumstances:

No lo digo yo, porque no le he tomado las medidas antes ni después. Para ser digna de admiración y cultos, esta imagen no necesita ser mayor o más alta, siendo su original altísimo, que es el mismo Dios ... [340]

Both Sebastiana's writing and that of Valdés is caught in this trap of asserting difference (as extraordinary virtue) while guaranteeing conformity. Moreover, their writing activity takes place in a *milieu* predominantly hostile to female spirituality and the excesses and superstitions it conjured up. One has only to consider the dissemination of the figure of a woman, dressed in a nun's habit which badly conceals her wolf's feet, doing an act of charity, as an icon of Hypocrisy to realise how popular the conception of religious dissembling and femininity had become.[341] The setting of this problem in the New World represents another exportation of a resolutely Old World set of concerns - the ideas and cultural and political associations surrounding female spirituality - all of which take on a distinctively different life in the New World. The writings of Sebastiana and Valdés, because of their Mexican context, allow an identification of the specifically American cultural and political stakes involved in such an association of femininity with 'seeming'. The difficulty Valdés evidently has to insert this New Spanish devotion to the *Niño* (which is in fact no more or less superstitious than many peninsular beliefs at the time) into a pure orthodox setting may thus be seen as indicative of the enormous

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[339] [And this {Christ} Child is the sorcerer of their affections, the bewitchment of their love, the magnet of their cares and the sovereign Adonis of their will.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. II.141-2.

[340] [I cannot say this myself because I did not measure the image before or afterwards. To be worthy of admiration and devotion this image does not need to be bigger or taller, its original being the highest, God Almighty Himself.] Valdés (1765) Bk. II Ch. II.142.

[341] Cesare Ripa's accompanying text makes the association of female spirituality and semblance absolutely clear *la testa china, con il velo che gli cuopre la fronte, la Corona & l'offitiuolo, dinotano che l'hippocrito mostra d'essere lontano dalle cose mondane & rivolto alla contemplatione dell'opere divine. Iconologia* (Rome,1603)216-7.

cultural 'work' needed to establish Spain in New Spain. The figure of Sebastiana as holy *criolla* clearly has many colonial hopes pinned to it; for surely only the pure New Spanish woman can resist the labyrinth of significations, and their peculiarly feminine charms, that her land suggests?

> *... son desempeños, al fin, de la galantería Mexicana, brujerías y juguetes con que divierten a la Señora México, que aunque Señora y Grande, le gustan mucho estas diversiones.*[342]

[342] [They are pleasures connected in the end to Mexican courtliness, spells and toys with which Lady Mexico, though a Lady and an adult, likes to be amused.] Valdés (1765) Bk. I Ch. III.18.

Chapter 4: Voyages in the New World Cloister: the Representation of Travel in the Hagiographic Literature of New Spain.

> *Basta decir que impelida de su ardiente fervor del bien de las almas y celo de propagación de la fe y derramar su sangre, anduvo por mar y tierra seis mil leguas, que en una mujer y monja es muy ponderable.*[343]

Bartolomé de Letona, *La Perfecta Religiosa: Vida de Gerónima de la Asunción*, (1662)

> *de romera a ramera hay poquísima distancia.*[344]

Alonso de Andrade, *Treatise on the Virgin*, (1642)

The founding of the first convents in the Spanish Empire in the Indies required a number of women to undertake the extraordinary journey to the New World. Like all the male pilgrims of Christian tradition whose virtue depended on voyaging, the journeying of these women put them in a liminal position in relation to society. The transatlantic voyage, with all its dangers and insecurities, constituted a challenge for even the hardiest of men, and the participation of women in such adventures elicited the reverential shock and allusion to martyrdom that the above quotation from Letona shows. Nevertheless, women were not just in physical danger when travelling, and their movement was not only a sign of physical strength. Their journeying was both moral vulnerability and sexual deviance as Alonso de Andrade's comment in his treatise makes apparent. In his opinion, there is but the slightest distance separating the movement of a pilgrim woman from that of the prostitute, a slip in virtue being mimicked by a corresponding slip in language.[345]

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[343] [Suffice it to say that impelled by her ardent fervour for the salvation of souls and zeal to see the faith spread and by her desire for martyrdom, she travelled by sea and land for six thousand leagues, a thing most wondrous for a woman and a nun.].

[344] [From pilgrim woman to prostitute there is but little distance]. Quoted in Julio Caro Baroja, *Las formas complejas de la vida religiosa: religión, sociedad y carácter en la España de los siglos XVI y XVII* (Madrid: Akal, 1978)190.

[345] Cf. the Papal Nuncio's description of Sta. Teresa (undated) quoted in Teófanes Ejido, 'Santa Teresa y su condición de mujer' in *SURGE* 417/418, no. 40 (1942): 255-275: *Femina inquieta, andariega, desobediente y contumaz que, a título de devoción inventaba malas doctrinas, andando fuera de la clausura, contra el orden del Concilio Tridentino* [capricious, unstoppable {lit. who walks about

In this context, the travel narratives contained in the convent chronicles and hagiographies of New Spanish cloisters provide an extraordinary source, retelling not only the progress on the path to salvation of pious nuns and their cosmic spiritual journeys, as was required by hagiographic convention, but also the real transatlantic voyages of women whose virtue was unimpeachable. Travel narrative as a genre is very much connected to the discovery of the New World and is a form of writing that is in many ways totally different from hagiography. In the context of Spain's evangelical empire-building mission, this representation of travel and its recording in hagiographies provides a unique opportunity to assess the role of women in the colonial project.[346]

The protagonists of the chronicles and *vidas* are predestined to be good travellers. The saint has always been a classic mediating figure in Western Christendom, providing a bridge between heaven and earth, between the known world and the unknown.[347] The *Vida de María de Jesús* (1676) by Francisco Pardo provides the most extended and rhetorically developed version of this notion. In a dream that bears clear parallels with such classical forbears as Scipio, María de Jesús is transported by two guardian angels through the cosmos. The title of the relevant chapter gives a good idea of the kind of voyage she undertakes:

> *Capítulo III. Cuan vigilante centinela, atalaya de todos los orbes, subió a explorar todos los hemisferios. Descubre los deleites de la gloria. Da vista a la triunfante Jerusalén y a la militante Sión. Vuela por las regiones diáfanas de las nubes. Divisa las horrores, gnmas del centro, burla las vocerías y ardimientos del abismo, penetra las inmensidades del mar: pasa nuevos lagos y retiros del purgatorio, corre por todas las provincias y naciones del universo, y rodea en palmas de ángeles todo el mundo.*[348]

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continuously), disobedient and rebellious woman who, using devotion as an alibi, invented wicked doctrines and wandered about outside the cloister, breaking the rules of the Council of Trent].

[346] Cf. Mary Louise Prat's comments, although concerned mainly with the English empire in Asia, on the heterogeneity of travel writing as revealing aspects of what she denominates 'cultural contact' and 'transculturation'. In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[347] For the role of the cult of saints as an exercise in mass communication with the divine, see Adriano Prosperi, 'L'elemento storico nelle polemiche sulla santità' in Zarri Ed. (1991)88-118.

[348] [Like an alert sentry, a look-out tower for all the planets, she rose to explore all the hemispheres. She discovers the delights of glory. She sets sight on triumphant Jerusalem and brave Zion. She flies over the diaphanous regions of clouds. She sees the horrors and sadnesses of the centre, outwitting the cries and desires of the abyss, she penetrates the immensities of the sea. She passes other lakes and secluded parts of purgatory, traverses all the provinces and nations of the universe and encircles the world with

This type of journey is clearly reserved for the chosen few, but the virtuous nuns who aspire to sainthood in these sources also share a more generally diffused spiritual notion of travel: that of the continual movement of the soul on its pious voyage to heaven and salvation. When Isabel de la Encarnación experiences her religious calling in a vision, its nature is that of a metaphorical journey:

> *... se le mostró un camino larguísimo, todo lleno de abrojos y agudas espinas, en cuyo remate había una luz tan pequeña que apenas se divisaba, y oyó una voz, que le dijo: Este es el camino que has de andar, y para llegar a gozar de la luz y descanso, has de pasar por él hecha pedazos, dejando las entrañas en esas espinas.*[349]

The enormous contradiction between the imperative that women should remain cloistered from the world within the walls of their homes or convents and the spiritual movement and drive for progress that they are also urged to undertake is evident. In some cases, the language used to describe the effects of prayer, the chief tool that the saintly mediators use to travel between heaven and earth, is so ambiguous it gives the impression of a completely breachable cloister:

> *... en aquel su retiro era donde desplegadas las alas de su corazón, volaba hasta el pecho de su esposo, para descubrirle los secretos más profundos; allí era donde veía volar al cielo al punto del morir a muchos de sus confesores: allí donde la divina Majestad le prometia que ninguno de los que le habían gobernado el alma, había de perder la suya; allí donde le mostraba Dios muchas almas que vivían en pecado mortal, para que se lo amonestase y corrigiese, y para que pidiese por ellas, para que enmendaran su vida: allí de donde la arrebataban por muchas leguas yendo en espíritu varias veces a las provincias donde tienen los Padres Jesuitas sus misiones, diciendo ella los parajes, las tierras, la nuevas conversiones, el modo de fabricar las casas y las chozas, el*

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triumphing angels.] Francisco Pardo, *Vida y Virtudes Heróicas de la Madre María de Jesús, Religiosa Profesa en el Convento de la Limpia Concepción de la Virgen María Nuestra Sra. de la Ciudad de los Angeles*, (México: Viuda de Bernardo Calderón, 1676)1.3.

[349] [She was shown a very long path, full of brambles and sharp thorns at the end of which there was such a small light it was almost impossible to see. She heard a voice that said, 'This is the path you have to walk, and to reach the joy of the light and of repose, you will have to travel on it and be torn to shreds, leaving your insides on those thorns.'] Pedro Salmerón, *Vida de la Vble. Madre Isabel de la Encarnación, Carmelita Descalza, Natural de la Ciudad de los Angeles* (México: Francisco Rodríguez Lupercio, 1675)4.16.

traje de los indios, y las señas de los misioneros, viéndose después todo cumplido.[350]

In the didactic literature of the day there is a clear attempt to resolve and contain this contradiction between the nun's enclosure and her role as holy voyager through a dichotomy separating the body from the spirit. The New Spanish hagiographies, however, show the impossibility of such a project most obviously because of the real nature of the voyages recounted. It is significant that the breaching of the cloister described above should primarily concern the action of the nun in purgatory and in evangelisation. The invention of purgatory, as has been argued by le Goff, significantly modified categories of space and time in the Christian imagination.[351] The idea of purgatory as a 'place', though theologically contested, was in practice widely accepted and is very much linked to the pastoral and evangelical role of the Church. Most notably, it was used in the diffusion of the faith because it provided instances of instructive *exemplae*. Purgatory could be travelled to and its inhabitants described, the accounts of their torments serving as valuable information for the preparation of the spiritual journey which the listener's or reader's own soul would inevitably have to undertake. Le Goff characterises the narrative mode of the sermon and hagiography as one which addresses a concept of time which is transcendental, that of salvation and conversion. The introduction of purgatory in the form of *exemplae* into such a narrative mode ushers in a use of historic time, which cuts across and

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350 [... it was in her cell where the wings of her heart spread and she flew up to the breast of her Husband. From this place she was shown the deepest secrets; she saw many of her confessors flying up to heaven at the moment of death, up to where the Divine King promised that none of those who had guided her soul would lose theirs. From here God showed her many souls that lived in mortal sin in order that she could chastise, correct, and pray for them so that they reformed their lives. From here she was also transported for many leagues, frequently travelling in spirit to the provinces where the Jesuit fathers have their missions. She was able to describe the places, the land and the new conversions as well as the way of building houses and huts, the dress the Indians use and what the missionaries looked like; all of which was later proved true.] José del Castillo Graxeda, *Compendio de la Vida y Virtudes de la Vble. Catharina de San Juan*, (Puebla: Diego Fernández de León, 1692)27.125. Cf Zemon Davis (1995)78-9 on the 'universalizing' spirit of Christianity that led Marie de l'Incarnation, who had never ventured out of her region and hardly ever out of her town and whose reading of travel literature was probably confined to the *Life* of St. Francis Xavier, to imagine in prayer that Christ bore her to every corner of the world. Marie did eventually make the real journey to Canada in 1639.

351 le Goff (1981).

interrupts this eschatological time, modifying its narrative and providing anecdote and story where there was only universal history, particularity where there was but generalisation.[352]

The importance and influence of the distinction between what I call 'historic' and 'eschatological' time in narrative is best illustrated by pointing out that it is basically the same distinction Auerbach makes in order to classify the two principal ways of representing reality in European culture.[353] Auerbach distinguishes what he calls 'legend' from 'history'. Legend is structurally impeccable and coherent, history is fractured and uncertain, registering secondary and even contradictory events. In this context, hagiography emerges as a genre somewhere between these two extremes, where the legendary structure is continually ruptured by the historic. This chapter argues that the fact of European expansion provided a 'history', and in this case a specific journey to a radically new and largely unknown destination, which gave rise to a series of *exemplae* inspired by the incommensurable specificity of the voyage and of the place of arrival. The journey of prayer that carries Catharina de San Juan in the above quotation from her cell to purgatory and then on to particular Jesuit missions where she is able to report accurately on the customs of the land she sees and on the dress and character of those who inhabit it, makes vivid how versions of the spiritual narrative of the cosmic tour often succumbed to the allure of a kind of description more frequently associated with the account of real journeys.

Even the stylishly polished hagiography of María de Jesús can be seen to indulge in this other narrative mode. The references to the paradise she sees on her

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[352] le Goff (1981)311 and his comments on the growing popularity of this type of narrative; *Ce temps successif qui est aussi le temps du récit est particulièrement sensible dans la littérature narrative qui connaît un essor extraordinaire après 1150 et surtout 1200: le lai narratif, le fabliau, le roman deviennent en quelques décennies des genres à succès.* (390).

[353] Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis; The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) see particularly Chapter One, 'Odysseus's Scar' (1974)3-23.

journey are in consonance with the most conventional requirements of learned hagiographic form, being a reproduction of the classical *locus amoenus*:

> *Llevóla el cortesano celestial más adelante y púsola en un prado ameno donde vió deleitosos paisajes, frescos bosques, ríos cristalinos, fuentes claras, y claridades serenas; allí también divisaron sus atenciones muchedumbre de aves coloridas y pájaros bellos, cuyo plumaje se entretejía de diversos matices y tornasoles y cuyo canto se armonizaba de celestiales trinos o gloriosas suavidades, siendo el lugar admirablemente espacioso y con extremo resplandeciente, tanto que hizo discurso esta religiosa, favorecida del mejor dueño, de que aquel tan deleitoso, claro y ameno estalaje no podía ser otro que el Paraíso terrenal.*[354]

This description of a place which is effectively 'no place' breaks down when the journey reaches purgatory however, and it is notable that the regions she sees here could be interpreted as representing the recent past of the land she travels from (New Spain), when it was still the place of idolaters. It is as though the New World, once acknowledged as a real geographical destination, but no longer the terrestrial paradise it was at first thought to be (and which is, in effect, 'nowhere') can only be narrated in the historic rather than eschatological mode:

> *De allí la llevaron los ángeles a otros diferentes y remotos climas, los cuales eran tierras de infieles, donde descubrieron sus ojos muchas riquezas, profanas pompas, sobrados placeres, amenas arboledas y agradables frutas, después de haber visto los gentiles y paganos, que habitaban en estos estados [...] la condujeron los propios paraninfos alados por los reinos y provincias de los Cristianos ...*[355]

From this, it is clear that the New World presented enormous difficulties for the imposition of European cultural norms, norms that travelled 'badly' and tended to 'go

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[354] [The celestial courtier took her further and left her in a lovely field where she saw delightful views, green woods, crystalline rivers, clear fountains and serene open spaces. There she also noticed hundreds of beautifully coloured birds whose plumage was made up of varying shades and lights and whose song was in harmony with the celestial tunes and chants of Glory. The place was spacious and bright, so much so that this nun, (who had been) favoured by the Good Landlord, could not but suppose that such a delightful, bright and pleasing resting place was anything other than the terrestrial Paradise.] Pardo (1676)2. 121v.

[355] [From there the angels took her to other different and remote climes which were the lands of the infidel, where she saw great wealth, profane pomp, excessive pleasures, pleasant trees and delicious fruits. After seeing the gentiles and pagans who inhabited these states, the winged angels took her through the Christian provinces and kingdoms.] Pardo (1676)2. 77.

native' at the slightest opportunity. The attempt to marshal the traditional elements of hagiographic form to explain and narrate the extraordinary situation of travelling nuns and the establishment of convents in idolatrous lands can be seen in the invocation of a predominantly 'male' hagiographic model, with references to the martyrdom and spiritual and physical 'desert' awaiting the nuns who undertook the journey to found convents in the New World. I will thus argue that the hagiographies examined clearly exhibit the strain of adapting a narrative form, which was becoming more and more rigid at the time, to stories telling of different lands and different experiences.[356]

The kinds of distortion travel and the New World can bring to both the hagiographic model of feminine sanctity and to conceptions of the feminine itself can be identified in the *vida* of Ana de San Joseph, a Spanish nun who lived her entire life in a convent in Salamanca but whose hagiography was reprinted in Mexico in 1641. During a spiritual voyage Ana not only journeys to a land of evangelical enterprise, but becomes a preacher herself; usurping that most sacred of male privileges, direct access to the Word of God:

> *Otras veces me sentía llevar sin saber de quién, y estando yo en arrobamiento veía mi cuerpo así vestido con el hábito, y de la misma manera que ando; y estando yo elevada, como si fuera otra, veía que me llevaban. Esto me ha sucedido muchas veces ir andando por el aire como volando; y algunas veces me hallo entre multitud de Indios de diversas naciones, con la doctrina Cristiana en la mano, y ellos están de rodillas oyéndola.*[357]

The absolutely unorthodox, not to say heretical, behaviour Ana de San Joseph describes herself as indulging in can only be imagined because of the distance

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[356] For the ossification of hagiography as a literary genre see Vauchez (1981).

[357] [Sometimes I felt I was lifted up, I do not know by whom, and being in ecstasy I could see myself, dressed in the habit and in the way I usually am. I could see how they lifted me, as if I were someone else. This happened to me many times, travelling through the air as if flying and sometimes I find myself amongst a multitude of Indians of various nations and I have the Christian doctrine in my hand and they are on their knees, listening.] Anon, *Vida de la Vble. Virgen Sor Anna María de San Ioseph, Abadesa del Convento Real de Descalzas y Provincia de Santiago de Salamanca*, (México: Franciso Robledo, 1641)82v.

separating her real cloister in Salamanca from her dream destination in the New World. Arrival in the Indies clearly placed the travellers and their cultural and religious 'baggage' in an extreme situation where such certainties as gender difference can already be seen as challenged by this, if not 'world-turned-upside-down', certainly 'other worldly' situation. New Spain however, did not only confuse the categories of gender difference but also those that divided civilisation from barbarism. The journey of a saint was certainly understood to imply an entry into a different world, but more specifically it meant abandoning civilisation for barbary, the city for the desert. Paradoxically, the presence of convents and their inhabitants in the Indies was supposed to signify precisely the *imposition* of civilisation, of the Spanish state and all its cultural, religious and political adjuncts. The strict entry procedures that legislated the race and social class of the nuns, the political intrigues and competition surrounding the foundation and patronage of convents and the important part they played in processions and celebrations in the city makes apparent their central role in the creation of a civic politics; a politics that was necessarily also a racial, religious and cultural one.

The New Spanish hagiography thus has to narrate the exportation of Spanish civility to an idolatrous land in narratives that range from the histories of heroic conquest by Spanish soldiers to stories of the equally heroic martyrdom of missionary priests. These narratives however, also have to affirm that the idolatrous nation in which such adventures unfold is ultimately (or will become) Christian and orthodox; the fitting place for such pious protagonists. It is in the representation of travel that the complexity of such a project is made evident. On the one hand, there is a desire to assert the specificity of the New World setting (its status as land of idolatry, for example) and, on the other, a wish to deny the pernicious effects of its difference (the fact that it might prove impossible to eradicate such beliefs completely).

One narrative strategy designed to resolve this paradox which can be traced in many of the writings, and which itself is caught in paradox, involves an attempt to

register movement without representing change. In a curious version of the relationship of time and speed to distance, the spiritual mathematics of nuns' journeys allows the representation of their voyages to consider these variables while bracketing the question of place. Nuns in the chronicles certainly travel on real as well as spiritual journeys, but they effectively go nowhere - the narratives refusing to acknowledge the change and difference inevitably accompanying movement. This static journeying, through its contradictory nature, neutralises the challenges to Old World political, racial and social orthodoxies posed by the New World's difference.[358]

An enlightening explanation of the importance of place in such a kind of journey is given in the remarks attributed to the Abbess of Sta Catalina, a Capuchin convent, on being offered decorations for the cloister:

> *¿Quién ha visto que los pasajeros que caminan ligeros al término donde van, busquen comodidades en los oficios y ventas? Pues nuestra casa es una venta donde estamos de camino para el fin que deseamos, que es lo eterno.*[359]

Place, in this case the cloister itself, which is figured as an inn on the route to heaven, is clearly of no importance on the journey to salvation. Nevertheless, it is crucial to represent movement in this Christian eschatology because of its inexorably teleological nature. Thus, the convent chronicles provide very detailed topographical information of the movements of the founding mothers upon arrival in the Indies. The itinerary is an established one, Veracruz, Puebla, the shrine of Guadalupe and then Mexico City, and it certainly takes on the value of pilgrimage with the visiting of holy sites and relics in convents along the way. Nevertheless, the geographical detail provided (however

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[358] Cf. Anthony Pagden on what he terms the 'logic of substitution' by which Europeans tried to steady the vertiginous experience of the New World. In '*Ius et Factum*: Text and Experience in the Writings of Bartolomé de las Casas' in *Representations*, Winter (1991): 147-162. Cf. also the idea of the 'place' in hagiography as *non lieu* in de Certeau (1977)287; *Il renvoie les lecteurs à un <au-delà> qui n'est ni un ailleurs ni l'endroit même où la vie de saint organise l'édification d'une communauté.*

[359] [Who imagines that passengers travelling light to their destination should seek comfort in hotels and inns? Well, our house is an inn on the way to our destination which is eternity] Sta. Catalina, *Crónica* (1620-63)127.

exact) remains, as Michel de Certeau puts it, a 'backdrop' against which the transcendental comedy of the nuns' immutably constant desire for salvation is played out.[360]

In a philosophically rigorous working out of this 'geography of the sacred', one would expect from these narratives a representation of travelling involving no experience of such movement and change on the part of its subjects. The nun, as ultimately innocent woman, would always be the dupe of the experience of travel which she would never experience *as* experience, her innocence turning it into events, places, things that happen to her but do not affect her. The chronicles certainly gesture at this in the emphasis on the enclosed nature of the journeys the nuns undertake. They move from covered coaches to ships' holds, staying overnight in convents and keeping to their liturgical hours in a representation of continual enclosure, emphasised by the insistence that their veils prevent them both from seeing and being seen. In the sermon that Juan Ignacio de la Peña uses as a source for his chronicle, during the journey, as the group crosses the Sierra Morena, in its journey to the coast, the confessor accompanying the nuns encourages them to look out at the view because of its beauty. They, however, refuse to lift their veils, saying they will see everything in heaven. As compensation for their sacrifice, the nuns are rewarded with a much more significant sight, which refers them to a place in the geography of the sacred rather than that of Spain: a vision of the Virgin.[361] In a similar rhetorical strategy, the nuns are represented as exempt from the usual female constraints on travel; they have no special demands and do not endanger the efficient progress of the expedition. In fact, they are not women, but that most hardy traveller of all, a male apostle: *unas mugeres varoniles,*

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[360] *L'histoire du saint se traduit en parcours de lieux et en changements de décors; ils déterminent l'espace d'une 'constance'.* de Certeau (1977)285.

[361] Rodrigo García Flores Valdés, *Sermón en las Honras Fúnebres que Hizo el Religiosísimo Convento de San Phelipe de Jesús de Madres Capuchinas de México a la Vble. Madre Sor. Theresa María de Guzmán,* (México: Francisco Ribera Calderón, 1707)246r.

verdaderas Apostólicas.[362] The function of this kind of description is to make clear that the huge distances covered in the journeys elapse outside historical time, the nuns never entering the world, Old or New, but transporting their cloister and its special time to a different place.[363]

Despite the considerable strength this hagiographic narrative imperative has to present movement without change and travels without places, the chronicles exhibit the influence of a radically different mode of writing about journeys which is resolutely historical. The manuscript chronicle of the convent of Sta Brígida is an excellent example of a narrative open to influences of this sort. In the chapter devoted to describing the journeys undertaken by the founding mothers, a considerable amount of attention is paid to circumstantial detail; the personality of the accompanying men, the kind of places chosen to sleep in overnight as well as the weather. Perhaps the most blatant modification of the hagiographic genre is the explanation of the foundation's enforced postponement due to war breaking out between England and Spain. The nuns are forced to remain in Cádiz for four years and are only eventually able to embark because of the danger of an invasion of the city. This situation is clearly translatable into hagiographic terms; the nuns as potential martyrs, the prey of evil heretics. Although this is gestured at in the chronicle, what seems to interest the nuns writing the account is more a historical explanation, along the lines of cause and effect (though the ultimate resolution is, of course, accredited to divine intervention) and an interpretation of individual reactions in very 'naturalistic' terms. In this remarkable

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[362] [Manly women, true apostles] Peña (1728)24. The 'strong woman' is a particularly resonant and apposite symbol for these nuns, whose evangelic and political role in Spain's empire-building finds an ennobling model in the biblical *mujeres varoniles*, Judith and Deborah. The comparison also makes the male author's interpretation of the Spanish mission in the Indies transparent; the chosen people being led to wildernesses they then evangelise.

[363] Cf. also the ability of the very presence of the nuns to neutralise the stereotypically less than virtuous masculinity of sailors, thus making the ship less of a ship and more of a continuation of the cloister: *Los marineros parecían escogidos, pues no oyeron las religiosas una palabra descompuesta. Rezaban tres veces al día el Rosario de Nuestra Sra., aún las coplas que cantaban, como acostumbran, eran de disparates que causaban risa y no ofendían sus oídos.* [The sailors seemed chosen, for the nuns did not hear a word of innuendo. They {the sailors} prayed the rosary three times a day and even the songs they sang were comic and made the nuns laugh rather than offend their ears] Enseñanza *Crónica* (1793)

modification of the hagiographic genre, the writing of these travelling nuns may be interpreted as supporting the argument that the principal contribution of narratives written about the New World was a radical reorganisation of traditional literary forms.

One of the most important of these modifications concerns the status of the writing subject and the issue of authority in the text. I will thus argue that the representation of travel in convent chronicles allows an exploration of the issue of the writing subject's gender and of their status as authors claiming to recount truthful histories. Traditionally, it was clear that the authority of texts written by women came through divine sanction, not a simple concept to assert as the increasingly juridical character of Curia enquiries into *vidas* shows. At this point however, I want to suggest how accounts of voyages to the New World reveal other strategies of asserting authority in writing.[364] The main problem for writers of histories of voyages to the New World was clearly the textual void they were also venturing into. It is apparent that one solution was to invoke the personal experience of the writing subject. The influence of forensic rhetoric in constructing the 'I' as witness in hagiography cannot be underestimated.[365] The increasingly legal nature of the *vida* mentioned earlier also meant that narrative events often took the form of a legal deposition, or at least gesture towards this type of truth in writing. Figueroa, in his introduction to the extant second book of the chronicle of the convent of Sta. Clara, comments on the greater historical value of an experiential account than one based on hearsay:

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[364] See Vauchez (1981) for an explanation of this change in the official review of requests for beatification and canonisation.

[365] The variety of approaches available is summarised by Pagden (1991)152; "This led to the creation of new genres, or at least, to new versions of old genres. First-person narratives such as that of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, declaring to be 'True Histories', over-extended letters, part descriptive and part evaluative, such as Hernán Cortés's *Letters of Relation*, even attempts such as Oviedo's *Historia General* to impose a loose Plinian structure upon the natural and human history of America - all these belong to recognisable European genres - chronicle, natural history, legal deposition - but they are also sufficiently unlike those genres for Carlos Fuentes to be able, without undue hyperbole, to claim them as the first 'novels' to be written about America." Cf. also Pagden's coinage, the 'autoptic imagination' for a development of this notion of personal experience and subjectivity in writing. Pagden (1993)51-87. Cf. Davide Henige and Margarita Zamorra, 'Text, Context, Intertext: Columbus's *diario de a bordo* as Palimpsest' in *The Americas* 46, no. 1 (1989): 17-40.

Siempre es templado en la verdad lo que vemos y siempre es sublime en la grandeza lo que [viera] de nuestras noticias la antigüedad o la distancia; alocución que el juicioso Horacio advirtió en su Arte Poética, diciendo que se concedía más la admiración cuando son testigos los ojos que cuando [resuena] solamente al examen de los oídos.[366]

The writing of Bartolomé de las Casas is classically taken to present the contradictory narrative pulls between the scholastic desire to invoke the authority of tradition in the form of an authenticating text, and an empiricist wish to assert the value of his own experience by constantly invoking his presence in the Indies. Although examples of the recurrence to personal experience in the chronicles may be found, and forensic rhetoric is certainly used extensively, it would be inappropriate to identify such marked contradictions in the convent *vidas*. Hagiography certainly provided a very authoritative form and canon of texts, yet it remained flexible, especially when its instrumental use as history, as in the New Spanish examples, required it to represent categories such as travel and cultural difference, usually outside its epistemological scope. Moreover, the didactic function of hagiography meant that such issues as the status of the writing subject and her or his relation to authority in the text were focused in a very different manner - a manner much more concerned with the text as 'tool' and as 'practice' - in fact, with its reception and consumption rather than with its production.

Once this focus on reception is acknowledged, the significant differences between how printed and manuscript works represent travel and its contradictions begin to make sense.[367] The printed works provide the most politicised intervention on this issue of the New World's difference and the modes of infusing its representation with authority. The manuscript writings touch upon these issues in a much more

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[366] [What we see is always associated with Truth and what antiquity or distance sees of our news is always sublime in its grandeur - a saying which wise Horace used in his *Ars Poeticae*, adding that admiration was more easily conceded when the eyes were witnesses than when only the ears had heard] Antonio de la Rosa Figueroa, *Crónica sucinta del Convento de Sta. Clara de México*, (Mexico: manuscript chronicle, 1755) unpaginated.

[367] A difference which also largely corresponds to a division by sex of the author, most printed works being by men, the manuscript writings by women.

tangential way. The representational task of both these sorts of texts must thus be understood as responding to factors 'outside' their composition, most notably their intended audience and the moment and the manner in which they would be consumed.

The accounts of voyages in the manuscript chronicles were intended for domestic consumption in the cloister itself. In the convent, their reading at moments of recreation would have served to create a notion of a community with a shared history expressed very much in terms of the experience of the founding mothers. The conventional use of the same pronoun to designate the protagonists of the history and its voyages (*nosotras*) and those who read about their exploits (*nosotras*), emphasises this. The audience's degree of estrangement from the experiences constituted by the wondrous real voyages recounted in the chronicles could be seen as complicating the construction of any sense of community around such extraordinary experiences. Nevertheless, this supposition must be made relative by acknowledging the ease with which spiritual voyages of a kind the modern reader finds remarkably estranging are also narrated. This latter sort of travel was a particularly apt way of illustrating the mediatory power of saintly individuals in the community and there are innumerable instances of pious nuns voyaging to purgatory, being shown their convent and learning about the very private vices and virtues of its members. This knowledge of *interiores*, as it is called, is of transparent didactic use but would have also functioned to create a sense that the cloister and its particular nuns were being carried towards salvation and redemption precisely through the persistent journeying of its more pious members.[368] When the plague strikes Mexico City in 1633, Agustina de San Juan's privileged knowledge is demonstrated in a vision she has of the nuns to be saved. Her mediatory

[368] For an account of the journeying of nuns to purgatory through prayer as being the predictable result of the enclosed nature of the religious vocation of women and the expression of a 'spiritual almsgiving' which compensated for their disqualification from more active roles as benefactors in society, see McNamara (1991).

role is emphasised by her post as gatekeeper of the convent, and it is while walking towards the gate that she retells her premonitory vision:

> *Siendo tornera, algunos días antes que comenzara este azote que Nuestro Señor fué servido de enviar, entró en el torno con muy grande alegría y dijo a sus compañeras: 'Madres, vengo contentísima, porque yendo a nuestra celda en el claustro he visto a la Santísima Trinidad en su Trono, y por un lado iba cogiendo monjas y por otro mozas'.*[369]

The power that these journeys to purgatory and other celestial spheres have to create a sense of community rests on their appeal to a shared *experience*, achieved in great part by the introduction of *exemplae*. These examples furnish the narration with an element of historic specificity, mentioning events and people who are real protagonists in the community's past. In this way, it can be argued that the spiritual journeying of pious nuns carried them closer to the community they travelled from. The *mise-en-scène* of their voyaging is certainly often staged in startlingly naturalistic terms, the trance being fixed precisely in time and its accompanying gestures being minutely recorded:

> *El día de los Santos Niños Inocentes de 1630, estando la Madre Isabel de la Encarnación muy fatigada de sus trabajos y dolores, y en especial en el costado, a las diez de la noche entró la enfermera a verla [...] en esta ocasión llegó la Prelada [...] Estuvo pues la Prelada en compañía de otras dos religiosas en la celda acompañando a la enferma. La cual, como si estuviera buena se sentó sobre la cama, arrimándose a la almohada, y quedó arrobada, con el rostro y los ojos tan hermosos y encendidos, que parecía un serafín ...* [370]

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[369] [During the time she was the gatekeeper, some days before this scourge of God descended on us, she came into the gate house very happy and said to her companions; 'Sisters, I am very content because just as I went into our cell in the cloister I had a vision of the Holy Trinity on its Throne and it called up nuns and young girls from one side and then the other.] Sta.Catalina *Crónica* (1620-63)48v-49.

[370] [The day of the Holy Innocents, 1630, Mother Isabel de la Encarnación was very tired from her torments and pains, especially the one in her side. At ten o'clock at night the nurse went in to see her [...] on this occasion, the Prioress arrived. She was there in the cell along with two other nuns keeping the patient company when the latter sat up in the bed as if she were well, leaning against the pillow, and she remained entranced, with her face and eyes so beautiful and illumined that she seemed an angel.] Salmerón (1675)6.103. Cf. Carlo Ginzburg's *I Benandanti: stregoneria e culti agrari tra cinque e seicento* (Roma: Einaudi, 1966) in which the vivid descriptions of the supernatural wanderings and night battles of members of a peasant community are interpreted by him as allowing privileged access to a popular stratum not only of beliefs but of lived experience.

In contrast, the printed versions of the journeys of nuns, both spiritual and real, address a much wider audience and their authors often have a transparent political agenda. In some cases this is the promotion of a specific religious order or what might be termed a precocious patriotic desire to defend New Spain from all charges of inferiority. Nevertheless, the valorisation of experience in creating a sense of a community and of its history, which is evident in the manuscripts, can also be found in the printed versions. Significantly, it is directly connected to the narration of travel. Here, the private perusal of the text through its reading takes on the character of a journey and appeals to the (significantly on this occasion) male reader by constructing a homology between any real journey he may have made or heard of and the metaphorical voyage of reading. For example, the readers of *Trono Mexicano* are invited to become as itinerant as the voyagers within the text and to consider their own travels when reading about those of the nuns:

> *Ponderen los que han navegado y experimentado los riesgos del mar; y los que no los han pasado por lo que han oido, admiren lo que padecerían unas pobres religiosas; que si las molestias y trabajos de una navegación son grandes, tanto tuvieron de mayores en las Madres, cuanto su instituto de más rigido, con el prólijo recato de su retiro.*[371]

The postscript to Isabel de la Encarnación's life is even more explicit about the shared experience the hagiography alludes to, invoking the traditional Christian *topos* of the *via crucis* as well as the temptations of the deceptively more comfortable way of sin:

> *Pues Cristianos de mi alma, no nos crió Dios para esta vida, sino para la otra [...] Para ir a la otra vida es fe Católica que no hay más de dos caminos; el uno, si bien es estrecho, áspero y desabrido (que es el de la virtud) tiene cierta e infalible seguridad, sin que haya peligro de perderse. El otro, aunque parece ameno y deleitoso, no lo es, porque sus deleites son falsos. [...] Alto pues, no seamos necios, y ciegos, caminemos por el camino cierto y seguro de los trabajos de la Cruz; para que imitando a esta Venerable Madre, alcancemos la*

[371] [Those who have travelled and experienced the dangers of the sea, consider this! And those who haven't, be amazed by what these poor nuns suffered, for if the inconveniences and troubles of an ocean voyage are great, how much greater even those undergone by the nuns because of the strictness of their rule and the excessive enclosure of their cloister] Peña (1728)29.

posesión de nuestra herencia, que es la bienaventuranza, que es el fin a que he dedicado el trabajo de esta Historia.[372]

In this injunction, the reader's personal spiritual voyage and the example set by Isabel's own travelling are joined in the notion of the journey constituted by the reading experience itself. As the reader reads Isabel's *vida* she learns from the examples given. How successful this didactic intent was remains a question for another study. Here, what is important to note is the mode in which such a transference from text to action was understood to take place. To return to the categories used earlier, the deployment of didactic examples introduces a historic time to what would otherwise be an eschatological narrative of a saintly life. In the New Spanish case, the introduction of such examples necessarily meant confronting and negotiating the difference the New World presented. Although the New Spanish convent chronicles and *vidas* may have wanted to affirm in their *exemplae* that only the place was new, not the institution or the orthodoxy of its inhabitants, the very recognition of place meant a compromise of hagiographic form. At points, the parallels to be drawn between exemplary women (*ave raris* by the period's own definition) and the strange monsters inhabiting the New World are baroque temptations too attractive for the male writers to resist. They use such a happy conjunction to display their learning by comparing the nuns to monsters in Pliny and other classical writers. In García Flores's sermon on Teresa de Guzmán (1755), she is compared to the monsters in Aulus Gellius who live only off the scent of flowers as well as to the antropophagus in Pliny who can only live and breathe in a specific country, hers being that of prayer and peace.

The affinities between the New World, the evangelical mission it suggested, and the narrative modes associated with both, point to the demise of pure hagiography in this context and, paradoxically, to its resurrection and success as a heterogeneous narrative form. The narration of the extraordinary real journeys made by these nuns from Spain to the New World is clearly a rich and allusive example of the manner in which the colonial hagiographies were called upon to be as flexible and permeable as the cloisters they represented in order to answer the needs of the historic and cultural

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[372] [Well, my beloved Christians, God did not create us for this world but for the next. To reach this other life, as is acknowledged by the Catholic faith, there are only two paths. One, though narrow, difficult and unattractive (that of virtue) has a sure and guaranteed security, there being no danger of getting lost. The other, though it may seem more easy and delightful, is not so at all because its pleasures are false. Therefore, stop. Let us not be stupid and blind, let us walk on the sure and true path of the sufferings of the

context they were written in. These texts function by inviting their readers to embark on emulative journeys to reach the virtues they represent and it is this didactic project which reveals most transparently that the travel narratives they contain represent not only the exportation of Spanish nuns to the New World but also that of Spanish cultural, racial and religious orthodoxies. The narration of this journey and exportation, I have argued, requires a degree of detail and historical specificity which militates against the project to neutralise the New World's extraordinary difference. The stories of virtue in the colonies were never quite able to escape the exoticism of the real adventure that brought them to such a far away place.

Cross, so that by imitating this venerable nun we may gain our inheritance of eternal happiness. This is the end to which I have dedicated the plot of this History.] Salmerón (1675)123.

Chapter 5: *Corpus Cristi*, or the Foundation of a Convent for Indian Women.

Paradise After the Fact: Late Colonial Society

In the eighteenth century, despite laws to the contrary, it is clear that there were Indians who, though not ordained, carried out certain priestly offices in Mexico City. Manuel Pérez, in a statement he makes before the then Archbishop in 1723, mentions this in order to argue that if the male indigenous population is permitted into the Church in this capacity, then Indian women should be allowed to profess as nuns. His syntax is a little confusing, and it could be conjectured that he himself is one of these Indian priests:

> *y estámoslo en lo muchos indios en esta ciudad sacerdotes, y muy perfectos, luego en su proporción no estorba su [ ] a ellas para los menos que en efecto que el sacerdocio, pues a ellos no se les estorba ser sacerdotes ...*[373]

Similarly, as far as Diego de Moza is concerned, Indian women have already shown a clear inclination for pious vocations, his evidence being that many have already entered Spanish convents as maids in order to live encloistered. Thus, the founding of a convent for such women would simply be the official recognition of a tendency toward virtue already made manifest. The convent of Corpus Christi eventually opened its cloister to accept the first Indian nuns in 1728, amidst great pomp and ceremony.[374]

Visits to several of the convents of the city had previously been carried out as part of a survey relating to the foundation of Corpus Christi. The documentation on which this chapter is based is in the section *Historia* of the Archivo General de la Nación and consists mostly of clergymen's depositions but also contains short summaries of these ecclesiastical visits. Clearly, the enterprise of founding such an institution was carried out with care and after considerable research. All the clergymen asked for their personal opinion as part of the process of founding the convent work in

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[373] [And many of us in this city are Indian priests and very perfect. Their { } is not a problem for {the women} who want something less than ordination, because {the men} are not impeded from ordination] Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Ramo Historia Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated. Hereafter, AGN Hist. All documents date from 1723.

[374] Cf. Mariano Cuevas, *Historia de la Iglesia en México* 4 vols., (México: Patricio Sanz, 1921-26) vol. 4.189 and Josephina Muriel, *Las Indias Caciques de Corpus Cristi* (México: UNAM, 1963) for accounts of the foundation ceremony and procession.

a specific ecclesiastical area, the *jurisdicción* of San Pablo, and it is from this area that the Indian women who eventually become the four founding mothers come.[375]

Joseph de Valderrama presents a report of the visit to the convent of San Juan de la Penitencia. The information relating to the virtue of Indian women is always mediated however, their virtue needing the confirmation of more reliable (i.e. non-Indian) witnesses. In this particular case two Spanish nuns, Nicolasa de San Antonio and Teresa de la Encarnación, testify in favour of various Indian women who lived and worked in the convent:

> *una y otra de las primeras religiosas ejemplares de este convento, las cuales aseguran haber conocido en el convento que a él vinieron desde niñas y en él murieron y acabaron con edificación de la comunidad, las Indias siguientes; Beatriz de San Pedro a quien aseguran que, habiéndole caído encima tres techos, se le apareció San Antonio y milagrosamente la libró.*[376]

The practical problems of setting up such an institution are manifold and many of the documents base their opposition to the foundation on these practical issues rather than on any theoretical or philosophical justification. Diego de Moza, for example, is clearly worried that the potentially precarious financial situation of the new foundation may militate against it and he tries to persuade the authorities that keeping Corpus Christi afloat financially would be a perfect opportunity for the city to display its charity and magnanimity:

> *porque tendrá en él quien ejercer su Magnanimidad, y quien reparte a tanto a comer ampliamente como esta nobilísima ciudad de México, poca fuerza hará el que se agregue un comedor más.*[377]

The professional opinion of the city's treasurer, however, is much more negative. The treasurer gives examples of previous foundations which have failed. His main explanation for their failure, namely that Indians are incapable of living in these

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[375] A transcription of the clergymen's testimonies is to be found in Appendix III.

[376] [Each of the principal and exemplary nuns of this convent assure that they have known the following Indian women from the time they entered the convent as children till the moment they died and that they were an edifying influence on the community: Beatriz de San Pedro, of whom they guarantee that when three roofing tiles fell on her, St Anthony appeared before her and liberated her miraculously]. Thirteen other nuns are mentioned but there are no other stories of miracles. AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated. For a very general introduction to the issues surrounding the profession of Indian women as nuns, see María Justina Sarabia Viejo, 'Monacato femenino y problemática indígena en la Nueva España del Siglo XVIII' in *Ier Congreso internacional del monacado femenino en España, Portugal y América: 1492 - 1992* (León:Universidad de León, 1993)173-185.

[377] [Because it (the city) would have something through which to show its magnanimity and for someone who distributes food so widely as this noble city of Mexico, it would be but a small effort to feed one more table] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

kind of communities, is presented as a commonly acknowledged truth. The treasurer confines most of his declaration to the practical problems of the foundation and the information he gives about how other convents for Indians have failed, the lack of adequate executive support and the poor supervision accorded them, provides insight into the critical financial situation of the city and into how the proposition to found another mendicant convent clearly presented considerable monetary pressures:

> *... con estas propias reflexiones se fundó el convento de la Limpia y pura Concepción de esta ciudad para que en él entrasen las de semejante calidad y profesasen vida monástica, como así mismo el de Santa Clara de la ciudad de Santiago de Querétaro que fundo un cacique; ni en uno ni en otro han probado las naturales, por haberse reconocido les es durísimo el entrar en las costumbres políticas que indispensablemente necesita la vida común, de suerte que por no inclinarse ni amoldarse éstas a sus reglas, se ha poblado ambos conventos de religiosas Españolas, siendo como es. Aun en lo material inexquible [sic] tan santo fin deseado por no haber prevenido nuestro Virrey las considerables porciones que se necesitan para preparar todo lo preciso del servicio del Culto Divino, manutención de religiosos o religioso que les han de asistir y demás dotaciones, no pudiéndose diferir tan importantes expensas a la contingencia de la mendiguez, pues aún para la diaria sustentación del número de diez y ocho religiosas, le fuera hoy difícil al público el contribuir por lo onerado que se halla el Comercio, que es de donde todo proviene, con los monasterios Mendicantes, y demás obras piadosas que se mantienen de la providencia; concurriendo el desmedido número de miserables mendigos de todas especies en que hoy abunda esta República, no bastando para su alivio la profusa caridad de sus abitadores [sic,] en cuya consideración siendo como es más obligatorio y prudente el haber de conservarse los monasterios ya edificados y calificados con tanta diuturnidad, que el haberse de construir y fundar el que no se necesita, contingente en su formal verificación y muy dudoso en su manutención.*[378]

Rather than exploring the practical difficulties, the other testimonies in the documentation relating to the foundation explore precisely the idea the treasurer mentions almost in passing, so obvious is it to him, that Indian women are somehow

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[378] [The convent of the Limpia y Pura Concepción in this city was founded for the same reasons so that women of the same quality could profess in it and also that of Santa Clara in the city of Santiago de Querétaro which was founded by a *cacique* (Indian chief). In neither have Indian women professed because it became clear it was very difficult for them to enter into the political habits indispensable for life in a community, so that, because they were not inclined nor could mould themselves to these rules both convents have become filled with Spanish nuns. Even in the necessary material (capital) such a saintly intention was not provided for sufficiently by our Viceroy, who did not set aside the correct amount which was needed to prepare everything necessary for the Divine Mass, the maintenance of a priest or priests to assist (the nuns) and the other necessary payments. Such considerable expenses could not be left to the providence of the mendicant state, for even the daily nutrition of eighteen nuns would be difficult today for the public to defray because of the difficult state trade finds itself in and from which everything comes for the mendicant monasteries and other pious institutions which are maintained by providence. The large number of poor beggars of all kinds which abound today in the Republic exacerbates this situation, the extensive charity of the inhabitants (of the Republic) not being enough. Considering this as one should, it is prudent to keep the monasteries already presently founded and approved than to build and found one that is unnecessary and which is still awaiting approval and is very precarious as far as its maintenance is concerned.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 f39v-40r.

unfit to profess as nuns. It is to these lengthy, detailed and more speculative discussions which, I will argue, address the core issues of the colonial and evangelical enterprise, that I will now turn.

Ontological and Political difficulties

In the Early Modern period, the ways of classifying men consisted both of physiological factors and of elements of social organisation. The classifications which resulted were complex and, obviously, sexually differentiated. The place of woman on this Aristotelian sliding scale between man and beast was a slippery one, perhaps made most explicit by the infamous decree of Philip II stating that the testimony of one Spanish man was worth that of two Indian men or of three women (race unspecified). This sophisticated manner of viewing difference met a considerable theoretical opponent in Christianity, since it ran counter to the fundamental claim that mankind was a universal category.[379] Some commentators on the foundation of Corpus Christi embrace the Christian universal argument without reservations. Antonio Pérez, for example, uses the parable of the wedding banquet, to which the global family has been invited, to make clear the spiritual worth of the female Indian population:

> *Señor, ya están todas las Nacionales convocadas para ser religiosas ... ya está todo prevenido [...] sólo falta la licencia.*[380]

It is clear, however, that not even the Dominican and Franciscan missions were able to fulfil a rigorously democratic spiritual policy towards their Indian charges. Robert Ricard describes how the Dominicans had two categories of communicants in their missions, those permitted to receive communion at any time, and those allowed to do so only at Easter or with special dispensation from the priest.[381]

The position of women within this universalist Christian scheme was as contested an issue as it had been in the Classical world, so it may be imagined that the position of Indian women was doubly complicated. Given the colonial context and the

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[379] Cf. Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)19

[380] [Lord, all the nationals (lit. indigenous peoples) have been called to profess [...] everything is ready [...] all that is missing is the official permission.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

[381] Robert Ricard, *La conquista espiritual de México: ensayo sobre el apostolado y los métodos misioneros de las ordenes mendicantes en la Nueva España de 1523-24 a 1572* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992)222

economic and political and religious stakes, any judgement on the nature of the Indian (man or woman) was not only a matter of strategic expediency, but an issue of transcendental proportions which involved questioning both of the period's dominant models of humanity, the Classical and the Christian.[382]

Different Women: the Role of Gender and the Politics of Cultural Transmission

Initially, it would appear that the position of Indian women in the Catholic hierarchy was literally unthinkable, such women being doubly disenfranchised from the patriarchal organisation of the Church by virtue of their sex and of their race. This was clearly a theoretical argument which involved reading patristic texts in a narrow manner and is contested in the various priests' reports on the strength of carefully chosen examples and stories. Nevertheless, though Indian women could be defended on this individual basis, it was considerably more difficult to defend them as a race, for although the Indian society which the Spanish colonisers encountered was organised through the sexual division of labour, it was clearly a different division to that of the Old World. Such a discovery could be considered much more disorienting than any geographical peculiarities the New World also displayed.

Notably, the matriarchal systems of inheritance and social organisation of many of the tribes of the New Spanish empire were seriously disturbing to the conquistadores and missionaries alike, for whom marriage, not motherhood, constituted the chief relationship binding the sexes. As Ian Maclean makes clear,

> *this European notion of woman was not confined to social organisation for, the belief that woman cannot be considered except in relation to the paradigm of marriage is reinforced by the ethical and medical vision of marriage as a natural state, found even in animals who possess neither a deliberative faculty nor freedom of choice.*[383]

The primacy of marriage as a model of the relation between the sexes for the European colonisers is indisputable, as is the fact that it constituted one of the strongest barriers to conceptual change concerning the status of women, let alone real

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[382] Cf. Pagden (1982)28, "Any judgement on the nature of the Indians [...] had thus to have its origin in a scheme which offered an explanation for the structure of the whole world of nature and the behaviour of anything animate or inanimate within it. [...] who or what were these 'Indians' and what was their proper relationship to the peoples of Europe?".

[383] Maclean (1980)57.

change. Given the tacit assumption that the origins of civil society were to be found in the family and the sexual differentiation of roles that constituted the father as its natural ruler, the power enjoyed by women in Indian family life and social organisation made them both conceptually impossible to imagine, except in a carnivalesque situation, and politically dangerous, precisely for the same reasons.[384] How was it possible to make of such a woman a nun?

The Franciscan friars who provided some of the earliest Spanish accounts of Indian society dedicated much of their rhetoric to vindicating the virtue of Indian women. This vindication clearly involved a selective 'reading' of Indian culture. In this case, the extremely enclosed lives the women were alleged to have led resulted in Spanish accounts filled with admiration. Clearly, the enclosure of women and the safeguarding of their virginity were actions that could unproblematically be classified as civilised behaviour by the European observers. The exportation of notions of paternity and honour that is implicit in the admiration felt by the Europeans is transparently culturally and historically specific. What is unique in the writings connected to the foundation of Corpus Christi is that this selective recuperation of elements in Indian society and social organisation is set in opposition to the racially and culturally heterogeneous late colonial society in which they are formulated. Jerónimo de Mendieta (1525 -1604), one of the leading Franciscans of the early evangelical project in New Spain and the chief disciple of Motolinía, provides the following description where the virtue of Indian women is the last refuge of a purity compelled to navigate in a chaotic urban world of racial mixtures and economic exchange. He thus inadvertently signals the fact that Corpus Christi would be a saintly 'anachronism' in the city. Moreover, imputing this prelapsarian quality to peoples present prior to the conquest clearly reveals a troubled relationship to the process of evangelisation and acculturation that has taken place in the colony:

> *... en la ciudad de México (que es una Babilonia), llena de mestizos, negros y mulatos, además de la multitud de Españoles distraídos, se hallan centenares de indias en su vejez doncellas, que en tanto número de años la gracia divina las ha conservado en su pureza y limpieza. Y otras mozas que con no poder evitar de salir a los mercados a vender o comprar sus menesteres, están tan enteras en la guarda de su virginidad, como las muy encerradas hijas de señores Españoles metidas tras de veinte paredes; que es tener en mucho a gente tan*

[384] Cf. Pagden (1982)53 on the family and civic society. In this respect it is interesting to recall the family structure imposed on the Indians who were forced to live in nuclear and patriarchal 'units' in the Hospitals set up by the early missionaries, most notably Vasco de Quiroga's in Sta. Fe.

abatida y desechada y puesta en tantas dificultades y peligros del mal mundo, para conservar la castidad ...[385]

In many ways, the testimonies of the priests favourable to the foundation rehearse Mendieta's argument, saying that Indian women have displayed a rare fortitude in the face of the depraved colonial society of Mexico City. Once again, it is important to note that the commentators refer to women of 'pure' Indian race (who also happen to be of the Indian nobility) which nicely displays the hierarchical notions of social organisation which underpin the religious argument of spiritual purity. In his testimony, Diego de Moza cleverly mobilises both the women's natural virtue and their nobility:

> *... no hallo que esta fundación pueda tener inconveniencia alguna, ni al Rey [...] ni al reino, ni a esta ciudad. Antes sí, me parece ser de mucha utilidad, porque las Indias caciques y principales podrán tener sin los estorbos del siglo la perfección de la vida religiosa, pues por la comunicación que he tenido de sus espíritus me consta el que muchas no adelantan en la perfección, guardando su virginidad, por no tener un monasterio en donde poder libre y espontáneamente entrarse. Pues tengo experiencia el que muchas Indias principales por conservarse vírgenes y por no tener para ésto ningún convento en donde siendo religiosas conservarse vírgenes, se han entrado muchas con título de mozas (como se puede ver en todos los conventos de esta ciudad), a servir a las religiosas con fin sólo de servir a Dios en ellos, consagrándole su virginidad, porque aunque los más de los Indios son inclinados a lo malo, casi todas las Indias son a lo bueno y virtuoso inclinadas ...* [386]

Notably, it is the hagiographic commonplace of abject humility, the fact that these noble Indian women are so pious they are willing to enter convents even as servants, which provides Moza with his most convincing rhetorical argument in favour

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385 [In Mexico City (which is another Babylon) full of *mestizos*, blacks and mulattos, as well as a multitude of venial Spaniards, there are hundreds of Indian women who, despite their advanced age are still virgins and whom Divine Grace has preserved in their purity and cleanliness for all those years. Other young girls, who cannot avoid going out to the markets to sell or buy things, have their virginity as intact as that of the daughters of Spanish gentlemen who are secluded behind twenty walls. This preservation of chastity is admirable in a people who have been so downtrodden and mistreated and put in so many difficulties and dangers by this evil world.] Jerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia Ecclesiastica Indiana, 1571* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1973) Book III also cited in Cuevas (1921-26) Vol. 3.369 in a chapter entitled, significantly, 'Creation of the Christian Home'.

386 [I do not find such a foundation to be inconvenient at all, either to the King, the kingdom, or to this city. Rather, it seems very useful to me, for the noble and aristocratic Indian women can thus have, without the disturbance of the world, the perfection of a religious life. Through the contact I have had with them in matters spiritual, I am aware that many do not persevere in perfection and keep their virginity, because they have no convent in which to profess freely and spontaneously. My experience tells me that many noble Indian women, in order to stay virgins and because of not having any convent where they can profess, enter them instead as servants. This can be seen in all the convents of this city, where they serve the nuns in order truly only to serve God, dedicating their virginity to Him, for though the majority of Indian men are inclined towards evil, the greater part of the women are inclined toward good and virtuous things.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

of their profession as nuns. As I will demonstrate however, this retreat to the universalism and absence of cultural specificity proper to the traditional hagiographic genre was to become increasingly difficult to sustain given the context of eighteenth century New Spanish society. The plan to found a convent for Indian women unavoidably raised questions about the concept, direction, and success of the entire evangelical mission. As I will contend, it also required that the agents of the evangelising project reflect on Indian society in ways which took into account issues of gender, and which asked them to communicate their knowledge in a specific type of discourse which could claim the authority of truth but which achieved this not through traditional rhetorical strategies usually associated with the championing of feminine virtue, such as hagiography, but instead through what could be described, not entirely inaccurately, as the provision of something approaching 'objective information'.

Mestizaje: the Process of Acculturation

The idea of founding some kind of religious establishment for the female Indian population had been present from the beginning of the Spanish colonial enterprise in Mexico. In 1530 six Spanish nuns made the journey form the peninsula to the New World in order to set up a school where young Indian girls would be taught. Four years later in 1534, Archbishop Montúfar brought eight *beatas* from Spain to be teachers and in the following year Cathalina de Bustamante, one of the original eight, paid for three more *beatas* to travel to New Spain in order to set up another school. Simultaneously, schools were set up to educate young Indian boys, the idea being that the Indians educated in these establishments would marry one another and that the Spanish evangelical mission would be thus accomplished. New Spain's first Archbishop, Juan de Zumárraga, argued precisely for this double mission the convent would have; the spreading of true religion and that of Spanish cultural norms:

> *Parécenos cosa provechosa y muy necesaria haber en esta ciudad de México un monasterio suntuoso de monjas profesas de la manera de Castilla, con que ellas tengan cuidado con las hijas de los naturales y las doctrinasen y tuvieren en todo recogimiento y encerramiento; porque de esta manera serían enteros cristianos ellos y ellas [...] y haciéndose así, allende de la doctrina que tomarían en las cosas de nuestra santa fe Católica, para cuando de allí saliesen a se casar [sic] enseñarían a sus maridos y casas las cosas de nuestra santa fe y alguna policía honesta y buen modo de vivir.*[387]

[387] [It strikes us as a good and convenient thing to have a wealthy convent like those of Castille in this city of Mexico. They (the nuns) would be charged with the care of the daughters of the Indians, educating them

This attempted incursion into the very heart of Indian culture, family structure and social organisation was a resounding failure, the schools lasting only about ten years. The girls educated in them (when their parents could be coerced or convinced to allow them to attend) were considered unmarriageable by the wider Indian community. The Indian élite refused to send their eldest sons to the schools, fobbing the Spanish authorities off with second sons or even the sons of servants.[388] Clearly, though the educational route may have seemed to be the royal road to religious and cultural acculturation, it quickly revealed itself to be filled with unexpected difficulties. Not least of these was the difficulty of maintaining a rigid division between what was Indian and must be re-educated and what was Spanish and must be communicated. Jerónimo de Mendieta himself, when describing the educational mission of these institutions, is caught up in these contradictions. He recounts that the Indian women were set to learn sewing and other 'feminine duties' common to Spanish women, but goes on to say that they already knew how to weave and that, in fact, they did this better than any woman from Castille,

> *porque lo usaban mucho y hacían telas de mil labores y muy vistosas, de que hicieron en aquel tiempo frontales para los altares y casullas y otros ornamentos de la iglesia ...*[389]

Nevertheless, education remained the privileged metaphor for cultural and religious transmission, however unclear the relationship between pupil and teacher sometimes became. The exponents of the argument in favour of the foundation are especially keen to emphasise the Indians' learning abilities, for it was a commonplace that un-civil persons were wholly the creatures of their passions and their enslavement could only be remedied by education and environment.[390] Women (of whatever race)

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in a cloistered and sheltered atmosphere, and in this way they would be fully Christian, both the Indian girls and boys. By doing this, apart from acquiring knowledge about our holy Catholic faith, when they left the convent to marry, they would teach their husbands and households both the things pertaining to our faith and as well as some good manners and a fitting lifestyle.] Quoted in Cuevas (1921-6) Vol. 4.177.

[388] Cf. Ricard (1992) See especially the chapters on the foundation of the seminary for Indian boys in Tlatelolco. Cf. also Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la educación en la época colonial: el mundo indígena* (México: Colegio de México, 1990).

[389] [Because they wove continually and made extraordinarily intricate textiles, all very attractive and in this period they made altar cloths and priests' robes and other church decorations] Mendieta (1571) Book III.

[390] For the diffusion of Aristotle's moral philosophy in Spain, the School of Salamanca and its study of Natural Law theories and the application of these to the New World context, see Anthony Pagden, *The Uncertainties of Empire: Essays in Iberian and Ibero-American Intellectual History* (London: Varorium, 1994). Also Lewis Hanke 'Aristotle and the American Indians' in *The Texas Quarterly*, 1 no. 1 (1958): 136-173.

were already a sex too closely tied to their passions and as such presented a particularly difficult case. The priests insist in these documents, however, that Indian women are receptive to their doctrinal teachings and are able to improve.[391] Hence Manuel Pérez's testimony takes as a premise the successful evangelisation of the entire Indian population, thus arguing that if the quality of education is assured, then Indian women's ability to learn how to become good nuns must be admitted:

> *Mírase (que ya yo lo he oído) que ¿qué entienden ellas el voto solemne de castidad, pobreza, obediencia y clausura? Respondo dos cosas; la una que ¿qué entienden ellos, o qué entendían de los demás misterios de nuestra santa fe? Y no obstante se les ha explicado por los ministros evangélicos y ya en su [ ] lo perciben (que ésto es innegable) luego con la explicación podrán percibirlo. Lo segundo, que yo conozco Indias que en el modo que pueden percibir y explicarme, han hecho voto de perseverar doncellas y no casarse, y mostraré en caso necesario Indias de dicha jurisdicción, doncellas viejas que nunca se han casado, luego si sin el cultivo y explicación de lo que es voto hacen esto, con su explicación, harán aquello.*[392]

Both Antonio Pérez and Manuel Pérez mention the seminary for Indian men at Sta. Cruz de Tlatelolco which was founded by Juan de Zumárraga and the Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza in 1536 as evidence of the ability of Indians to learn spiritual virtue. They contextualise this argument by saying that after two hundred years of colonial rule, the Indian population will be even more disposed to learn, having

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[391] Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru argues that Indian women learnt the lessons of assimilation and acculturation much more quickly than their male counterparts. She links this fact to the rapid decomposition of the Indigenous élite because Indian women were taught Christianity in convents in groupings which ignored indigenous customs of social segregation and hierarchy. In 'Tradición y ruptura en la educación femenina del siglo XVI' in *Presencia y transparencia: la mujer en la historia de México*, Carmen Ramos *et al* Eds.(México: Colegio de México,1987)32-50. A similar argument that women were special vectors for the transmission of cultural values is put forward by Solange Alberro in relation to Inquisition cases concerning Jews. Alberro claims the *judaisante* family - and particularly the women in it - are a perfect metaphor of the process of assimilation and integration underway in the colony, and that in fact the very fabric of colonial Jewish religious practice was transformed as a result of the domestic and feminine sphere becoming its privileged space. Alberro (1988)204.

[392] [So, I have heard it said; 'What can they know about the solemn vows of chastity, poverty, obedience and *clausura*?' And I have two replies: firstly; what did they know or understand about our holy faith? And still it was explained to them by the evangelising ministers and they understand it now and so, with clear explanation, they will understand the other things. Secondly, I know Indian women who have listened to my explanations and teachings and who have taken a vow to remain virgins and unmarried and if it is necessary I will point out the elderly Indian women under my jurisdiction who have never married. Thus, if without a full explanation and continual guidance of what such a vow implies they are still able to do this, with the correct kind of explanation they will certainly be capable of professing.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated. For an equally trenchant assertion of the success of the evangelic project being tied to the passing of time, see Antonio Pérez's commentary; *si asi recién convertidos producía el fruto contemplativo, Vuestra Reverencia, hoy en día, ¿qué tales estarán con más frequencia, con más maestros, con mayor práctica y trato con los Españoles?* [and if newly converted they produced contemplative gains Your Reverence, then today, with greater practice, more teachers, more experience and knowledge of Spaniards how will they be?] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

witnessed examples of Christian virtue and the Spanish way of life. Both seem to ignore the fact that the seminary never had as its purpose the hispanicization of the Indians, but the force of their argument rests on its claim to be historical rather than on its accuracy:

> *... después de doscientos años de cultivo y mucho más los de esta ciudad con el mucho comercio de Españoles, ¿por qué no creeremos que hayan ya desterrado su natural ignorancia y rudeza? Y si ellos la han desterrado siendo (como es cierto) más inclinados que ellas a embriaguez y a otros muchos vicios, ¿por qué no creeremos que ellas, que no son tan inclinadas, tengan menos rudeza y mucha habilidad?*[393]

Manuel Pérez then suggests that a convent for Indian women would be the crowning glory of this educational-evangelical mission. He represents evangelisation as a process which displaces pagan beliefs using remarkably concrete language. Pérez describes the *literal* replacement of idolatrous sites with Christian temples, of Indian priestesses with nuns, of human sacrifice with prayer:

> *... y según todo lo dicho, suplico a Vuestra Merced se sirva de informar a mi Rey y Sr. lo necesario que es para el bien de sus almas, de la República y servicio que a Dios Nuestro Señor se hace - porque en algún modo le desagravie esta nación - ofreciéndose estas niñas, a ser cándidas azucenas en el claustro de la Iglesia, ofreciéndose así por las muchas que en su antigüedad al demonio sacrificaban, pues refieren las antiguas historias que en este pueblo de Tlatelolco, que quiere decir montocillo de arena, adoraban al ídolo Huichilopostli con tanta ceguedad y crueldad que de año a año se numeraban más de trescientas doncellas, sacándolas vivas el corazón por las espaldas, con cuya sangre victimaban a su falso Dios. Pues ahora Señor, salga el corazón por la boca, prometiendo a Dios sus almas, para desagraviar las ofensas de sus ciegos antepasados.*[394]

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[393] [After two hundred years of cultivation, will we not be convinced that they have banished their natural ignorance and primitivism? This even more so of the inhabitants of this city due to the great commerce they have with Spaniards. And if the men, being more inclined to drunkenness and other vices (something which is true), have banished it, why will we not believe that the women, who are not so inclined, will be less primitive and very able?] Hist Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated. The seminary was not intended to prepare Indian men for ordination but to provide them with a very complete and classical Renaissance education. The great ethnographic projects of the early colonial period began here, Bernardino de Sahagún, for example, recruiting his informants and collaborators from the school's pupils. Cf. Ricard (1992)231-254. For the linguistic politics of the Mendicants in Tlatelolco see Ignacio Osorio Romero *et al* Eds., *La tradición clásica en México* (México: UNAM, 1991) See also Bernand & Gruzinski (1993)171-173 and Phelan (1970)86-91. On the hispanisation of the Americas see Angel Rama (1982)93-136.

[394] [Following on from everything I have said, I pray that Your Grace inform the King how necessary such a foundation is for the good of their souls and that of the Kingdom and that it will be a great service to God. In this way, this people will expiate itself, offering these girls as pure lilies in the cloister of the church in exchange for the many that were anciently sacrificed to the devil. The ancient histories tell that in this town of Tlatelolco, which means *hill of sand*, the god *Huichilopostli* was worshipped so blindly and with such cruelty that each year three hundred young girls were sacrificed to it, their hearts being ripped out of their backs and their blood being offered to this false god. Now, let the Lord make their hearts fly out of their mouths in promises to give Him their souls, so as to expiate the sins of their blind ancestors.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

Unfortunately, however, these reports were written two hundred years after the primal scene of discovery of the New World and its peoples, and the latter have had their innocence as well as their racial purity seriously compromised by a long period of cohabitation with their invaders. On the one hand, the testimonies exhibit a desire to interpret evangelism as a massive imposition of Truth over error, the victory of the Word. On the other, in order to understand this victory, the concept of the passing of time and the changes it implies has to be considered - thus disturbing the static nature of education-evangelisation, transforming it into a dynamic, and much more ambiguous, process. That the model for evangelism, as soon as education was considered a crucial part of it, became synonymous with one of cultural negotiation and thus utterly different from the first separatist missionary strategies, is apparent from the recurrence to metaphors of exchange itself. These alert one to the fact that words, goods and information flowed both ways in the New Spain of 1723. The imperial dream of the imposition of forms, embodied in the citation from Pérez, resolutely remained an oneiric fantasy in the New World. Consequently, the clergymen have also to acknowledge the presence of a racially and culturally heterogeneous society, a *mestizo* New World where the question of whether Indian women are now fit to become (Spanish) nuns necessarily implies a review of the entire evangelical and colonial project and of the specific role of women within it.

The Religious and the Secular

If the evangelical project is also an educational and cultural one, then in the encounter with another culture, which had a different notion of both education and religion, there is clearly a problem of defining the sphere of influence of these concepts. And not solely in the encounter *between* the two cultures, but internally to each of them. A very simple example of this confusion (truly only confusion if we judge from a contemporary perspective of discrete public and private spheres) is embodied in another of Antonio Pérez's arguments against the foundation of Corpus Christi. Here Pérez makes clear the fact that Indians occupied a special position, by virtue of their 'Indianness', in colonial society, and that this was linked to the political and social economies of New Spain. Wanting to found a convent for Indian women thus

necessarily begged the question of the place of Indian women in each of these respective economies, not only in the religious one. Pérez argues that Indians are slaves who pay a tribute to the crown and that if Indian women were to take vows of chastity as nuns, the number of people born into this enslaved estate would decline. It is tempting to conclude that this would in fact be the logical consequence of totally successful evangelisation and complete acculturation: the disappearance of Indians through the profession of Indian women as nuns. Without reading too much into Pérez's argument however, the shifting boundaries between the religious and the secular are very apparent:

> *según lo dicho se infiere que las Indias tienen la dicha servidumbre legal y teniéndola no pueden entrar en Religión. ... cesando el tributo, o esas la contribución; cesando la contribución, fuerza es se disminuya la Real Hacienda por que aunque ellas no pagaran, perdiera el Rey el derecho a la especie que se disminuye; luego según ésto no pueden ser religiosas supuesto que no son libres ...* [395]

Though not as extreme in its consequences, the Church's establishment of a sacred universe of saints' days, theatrical pageants and cults of images to replace the extirpated idolatrous practices may be considered as one of the best proofs of its success in the acculturation of the Indians. It most certainly meant that notions of orthodoxy and authenticity pervaded actions which would now be considered as 'outside' religion.[396] For example, the church was very sensitive to the link between everyday eating and the divine cult and legislated on what kind of grain it was licit to make the host out of. Women's role in food preparation thus conferred substantial symbolic status upon them, confirming their place in an experiential spirituality which concentrated on the body rather than the intellect, and posing an implicit threat to the privileged relationship of male priests to the incarnate Word.[397]

The sacrament of the Eucharist was of course one of crucial importance, having at this stage in Counter-Reformation thinking become a kind of litmus test of orthodoxy.

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[395] [From what has been said we may infer that Indian women are subject to the said legal slavery and because of this cannot profess. [...] if the tribute stops or the contribution, because of this cessation, the Royal Coffers will undoubtedly diminish for even if they (the Indian women) do not pay, the King will lose his right over the species (of Indians) which will diminish. Thus, because of this, they cannot be nuns] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated. That the Indians were considered legal slaves was untrue and it is difficult to know what exactly Pérez may be referring to.

[396] Cf. Bernand & Gruzinski (1992)157.

[397] For an analysis of popular and female magic that pays especial attention to notions of the *habitus* and *practice* as expressed here see Ruggiero (1993)117, and for women's special relationship to food and the Eucharist, Walker Bynum (1987).

The Eucharist is doubly interesting in the colonial context because not only did its materiality as a sacrament (the grain the host was made of) pose questions of cultural specificity, but more significantly so did the materiality, or rather the physicality, of the communicant's *body*. One has only to think of the scandals surrounding frequent communion by women in Europe and the attempts to limit their access to the sacrament to realise how the emphasis on the communicant's purity and on the *consumption* of the divine body and blood highlighted anxieties about the human body that were not solely religious.[398]

In order to be received, the sacrament required a degree of inner and outer purity on the part of the communicant which in the New World context was sure to need some degree of 'racially' inspired ratiocination. Thus, Antonio Pérez's lengthy discussion about the cleanliness of Indian women and the care they take in preparing themselves before communion reveals how closely notions of purity, eating and sexual continence were tied to the care of the body and how this in turn was a body in a specific cultural context. Pérez's comments are a perfect example of the cultural 'translation' through which the observers of Indian life expressed themselves. He carefully picks up the details of Indian behaviour which are consonant with Old World norms, in this case those of Hebrew tradition:

> *Las que son doncellas guardan las tradiciones hebreas de no irse con los hombres, de ayunar los sábados, sin obligarles, pareciéndoles ser pecado. [...] Habiéndoles, pues, enseñado el ayuno natural (que es necesario para recibir el eucarístico sacramento) me consta de su observancia que les dura el ayuno cuarenta horas, comiendo la víspera a medio día hasta las cinco o las seis de la tarde del día que han reservado al Divino sacramento. No prueban bocado, ni ese día comen carne, solo beben un poco de chocolate, cosa que en todo el año no prueban, y la que por necesidad de preñez, enfermedad o sed, la tarde o noche antes de comulgar comieron pan o tortilla o bebieron agua, en la reconciliación lo confiesan por culpa, preguntando ¿Podré comulgar? Porque anoche o ayer tarde, me lo moría por agua o me lo moría por comer. No haciendo esto por ignorancia, sino del Santo temor de Dios que tienen, la gran reverencia con que preparan sus cuerpos para comulgar siendo tal, que ese día con ninguno hablan, estándose en la iglesia hasta las doce, por lejos que vivan, con los ojos bajos, los brazos cruzados, de uno en uno sin hablar unos con otros como tengo dicho, poniendo en las entrecalles, uno sahumadores con lumbre, incienso o copal, saliendo otros de las casillas con los mismos instrumentos a perfumarles los pechos, por las especies que acaban de servir.*[399]

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[398] Cf. Zarri (1990)87-163 on frequent communion, *beatas* and the ecclesiastical hierarchy's interpretation of this practice as a threat to the (male) priesthood.

[399] [The maidens keep the Hebrew tradition of not having sex (lit. seeing any men) and fasting on Saturdays not because they are obliged, but because they consider it a sin. Having shown them the usual manner of fasting in order to take communion, I can guarantee that they fast for forty hours, eating at midday the day before and then nothing until five or six o'clock of the actual day of the Sacrament. They

Nevertheless, the growing complexity of the late colonial context, in which what was 'before' the conquest and what 'after', what 'Spanish' and what 'Indian', is no longer quite so self-evident, is signalled by Pérez's concern with the use of chocolate - the alimentary and religious politics of which was precisely a product of the massive acculturation underway.

The Ancients and the Moderns: Jesuits and Mendicants writing

The priests who note down their opinions about the foundation of Corpus Christi are either Jesuits or Franciscans. As the convent was meant to be a Franciscan foundation, it is no surprise to discover that the Franciscans testify in its favour. Why all the Jesuits should be against the foundation is less evident however, and begs an explanation as to why this division should manifest itself so absolutely along the lines of affiliation to a particular religious order.[400]

All the testimonies share a historical approach to the foundation, reviewing the success of the evangelical project so far in order to place themselves in relation to the idolatrous past, tell its history, and predict or dictate its possible future. The negative Jesuit testimonies, however, often strike a much more theoretical note, putting forward general conceptions of Christianity and of the barbarian. Thus, the Jesuit Joseph María

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eat nothing on that day, no meat at all. Perhaps a little chocolate, which usually they don't touch during the year. If someone who is ill, pregnant, or very thirsty has some bread or *tortilla* or drinks some water on the evening before the communion, during the reconciliation they confess it as a sin, asking, 'Can I take communion? Because last night I was dying for some water or for something to eat'. They don't do this out of ignorance, but through righteous fear and because of the reverence with which they prepare their bodies for communion. On the actual day they talk to no one, staying in the church until twelve, however far away they live, with their eyes cast down, their arms crossed, on their own without talking to each other. They place in the cross-roads some incense burners with tinder, incense and resin. Some people come out of their houses bearing their own burners, with which they perfume their breasts using the above mentioned spices.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

[400] Cf. Ricard (1986) for an account of the Franciscans in the colony and Gerard Decorme, *La obra de los Jesuitas Mexicanos durante la época colonial* (México: Porrua, 1941) 2 vols. for the Jesuits. The position of both religious orders to the acculturation of the Indians and their spiritual potential shifted to and fro throughout the period. Although the Franciscan position was usually sympathetic towards the Indians and in the first years of evangelisation fiercely enthusiastic, works by Motolinía (1500? - 1569) and his follower Jerónimo de Mendieta (1525 - 1604) put forward the view that the Indians were children and thus required perpetual tutelage, a condition making them unfit for the priesthood. In contrast, in the late eighteenth century, various Jesuits - notably Francisco Javier Clavijero (1731 - 87) - wrote works in defence of the Indians and creoles and which refuted claims about the pernicious effects of the climate of the Indies on character. Cf. Brading (1991)Ch. 20, 'Jesuit Patriots'. At different times, both Franciscans and Jesuits were accused of 'empire building', cf. Phelan (1970)62-9. For an excellent review of the classical traditions informing many of these switches in missionary policy, see Sabine MacCormack, '"The Heart has its Reasons", Predicaments of Missionary Christianity in Early Colonial Peru' in *HAHR* 65, no. 3 (1985): 443-466.

de Guevarra argues that God created human beings with qualities in proportion to their abilities but this does not mean that their liberty is in any way affected, for they are completely free within this providential system. Nevertheless, it is a system which allows for inequalities. In it, some spiritual paths are more perfect than others, and some persons more spiritually gifted than others. The force of Guevarra's argument is that of consonance and decorum; each person must follow the path most fitting for his or her abilities, which may not necessarily be the most perfect one. Given the inconstant nature of the Indians (a *natural* failing which he attributes to them) it is clear that they are unfit for a religious vocation. At this point, in what has been a vulgarisation of the theory of Natural Slavery, understood to mean simply the Indians' inferiority, Guevarra is finally driven to description, telling anecdotes about his personal experience of inconstancy in the Indian population and his certainty that their correct spiritual path is a more lowly one than profession as a monk or nun.[401]

Alejandro Romano, another Jesuit and the other main exponent of the arguments against the foundation, also follows this reasoning. He begins by defining what a convent and its community is and then goes on to show how Indian women are incapable of fitting this definition. Their main disqualification is their inability to live in communities. For this he offers an historicist defence, describing how the barbarians of the New World lived as nomads until the arrival of the Spaniards. He also alleges their lack of intelligence and consequent inconstancy of purpose as making them unfit subjects to profess as monks or nuns. Finally, he points out that Spanish law considers the Indians to be minors in certain cases, and that this should be taken into consideration for it means they are not fully responsible for their actions (or fully free to act) and so cannot take religious vows.[402]

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[401] Cf. AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 ff28r - 30v.

[402] Cf. AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 ff34r - 38r. Villavicencio gives more information on this point, referring to a specific law which 'protects' Indians who are landowners. The Crown certainly passed many laws for the defence of Indians, those concerning the *ecomienda* perhaps being the most well known, and Villavicencio's interpretation of Indians being considered as 'minors' in juridical terms was commonplace: *... y por su flaqueza, y cortos alcances, y rusticidad son exemptos de la obligación de guardar algunas leyes eclesiásticas que obligan a todos los demás, y por considerarlos el Señor como pupilos y menores, les ha concedido los privilegios de estos y no permite que sus contratos, principalmente la enajenación de tierras en pasando de la corta cantidad de 30 pesos, corran ni subsistan sin la intervención del Juez y prólijas solemnidades de la ley 27 título primero, libro sexto de la novísima de Indias para evitar el que por su corta capacidad no sean engañados ni se les causen fraudes, y perjuicios ...* [And because of their weakness, feeble-mindedness, and rusticity they are exempt from the duties of various ecclesiastical laws which bind everyone else. The Lord considers them as minors and pupils and has conceded them the privileges of this state and does not allow that any contract of theirs, and principally any pertaining to the ownership of land of greater value than thirty pesos, be dealt with without the intervention of a judge and of

The reports in favour of the foundation are markedly different in their rhetorical style to the negative ones, privileging historical arguments more frequently and grounding the force of their reasoning on the years of work and experience on the part of the witnesses. In an attempt to counter the idea that Indians are naturally inferior, Felipe de Abarca, Diego de Mendoza and both Antonio and Manuel Pérez respond with their personal experience of the pious initiative displayed by members of their Indian flock. Their discussion takes place at a much less theoretical level, having to counter both the theoretical arguments of their opponents and the popular incarnation of these arguments as stereotypes commonly held about Indians. In an interesting and significant opposition, the positive argument is much more sophisticated in its advocation of the political and cultural implications and importance of the foundation, not confining itself only to its spiritual dimension.

The references to pagan history, which moves backwards and forwards in time and degree of civilisation as required by each witness, indicate the centrality of the foundation in the debate as to whether the Indies were truly Christian (and civilised) or continued to be pagan (and barbaric). The fact that both the Jesuit and the Franciscan points of view, though they may be described parodically as respectively 'scholastic' and 'humanist', break down into what could be termed broadly historicist accounts of this debate, is significant. In order to understand the implications of this historicist narrative turn, it is useful to consider a moment of great significance in the discussion about the Christian civility of the colonies around 1604/05, the years when the first *extirpaciones de idolatrías* began.[403] The *extirpaciones* proper took place in Peru and were, overwhelmingly, a Jesuit enterprise. In Mexico, the *extirpaciones* never spread so successfully, no doubt because of the stronger Mendicant presence and the fact that the evangelical mission had had more time to impose itself in New Spain. Nevertheless,

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all the relevant laws, principally the 27th of the sixth book of the new laws of the Indies, in order to avoid that they be cheated because of their feeble-mindedness or that frauds or other prejudicial acts be perpetrated against them.] f53r-53v. The text of the law Villavicencio refers to, drafted in 1571-2, certainly encourages this interpretation of the Indians standing in need of the paternal protection of Spanish law; ... *que el vendedor indio parezca ante algun juez ordinario a pedir licencia para hacer la venta, y constándole por alguna averiguación que es suyo lo que quiere vender, y que no le es dañoso enagenarse de ello, le dé licencia, interponiendo su autoridad en la escritura, que el comprador otorgare, siendo mayor y capaz para el efecto.* [that the Indian who wishes to sell appear before a justice of the peace to request a licence for the sale. And, after investigating and certifying that the property belongs to the Indian and that it will do him no harm to sell it, the justice should give the licence, lodging his authority (as justice) in the document the buyer executes, he being superior and qualified for the duty.]

[403] For an interpretation of the rediscovery of idolatry in the Spanish Viceroyalties see Bernand & Gruzinski (1992) and (1993).

the panic generated by the rediscovery of idolatry was shared by the two Viceroyalties and its management was not exclusively a Jesuit activity. Although there is clearly a political interpretation to be made of the Jesuit pre-eminence in at least the Peruvian *extirpaciones*, here I will concentrate on the effects the philosophical and religious mind-set of the *extirpador* implied for the representation of the colonial context, for the writing of its history and for the way its future came to be envisaged.

The different philosophies of acculturation which are evident from the positions taken by the Franciscans and Jesuits in relation to the rediscovery of idolatry may be the key to understanding their radical disagreement over the foundation of Corpus Christi. During the *extirpaciones*, the Jesuits revealed their scepticism about the Indians being able to be anything other than Indians (something that did not of course prevent them from being good Christians). The Franciscans, however, saw evangelisation as necessarily involving the communication of a political and cultural identity. Thus, for the Jesuits, the notion of an Indian nun was a nonsense, something that would complicate their missionary goal, while for the Franciscans the Indian nun symbolised the achievement of their several goals.[404]

Whatever the attitude to the indigenous cultures, the rediscovery of the pagan was a moment for a kind of concentration upon them which had been abandoned since the first missionary efforts. The *extirpadores* were asked to write reports very much like the ones on which this chapter is based, first person narratives which placed enormous value on empirical evidence and observation. The nature of the evidence and of what was observed also constituted a great innovation in the way of 'thinking' the Indian people and their culture for, as Bernand and Gruzinski explain, the extirpators became interested in how tradition was communicated and transmitted from one generation to the next. Bernand and Gruzinski also point out the importance the extirpators made of the distinction between traditions they considered to have been inherited mechanically

[404] On the antipathy of José de Acosta (Jesuit historiographer and founder of the order's first *reducción* in Peru in 1578) towards the idea of making Indians more Spanish on the grounds that it would be 'the downfall of everything' see Pagden (1982)164. See also Girolamo Imbruglia for the selective preservation of facets of indigenous culture in the Jesuit *reducciones*. In *L'invenzione del Paraguay: studio sull'idea di communità tra seicento e settecento* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1983)26. For the cultural syncretism of the ceremonies of profession in Corpus and their particularly 'Franciscan' character, see Muriel (1963) who describes entire Indian villages parading into the city to deliver the novices, dressed in magnificent indigenous clothes, to the doors of the convent.

and those they perceived as the result of transformations wrought by personal initiative.[405]

I will argue that the reports on the foundation of a convent for Indian women form a body of texts which sheds greater light on the object of study of the *extirpadores*. Here the questions of how culture is transmitted, how the *habitus* in which religious practices are carried out is constructed, and of what the place of personal inventiveness and autonomy is in all this recover a gender dimension, precisely because they are asked in relation to women. The personal accounts discussed here concentrate primarily on the female reception of the Word in the New World and on how this Word is interpreted and practised by Indian women. As a result they are extremely revealing about notions of the feminine and of popular piety. The catalytic role women are seen to play in the process of transmitting religious (and by implication, cultural) norms is eloquently described in Antonio Pérez's testimony, where he alleges that women have been quick to assimilate all the new religious practices, embracing them so fervently that they erase any past idolatrous customs, calling the 'new' Christian practices their 'customs':

> *... asiento por asumpto [sic] y siento por conclusión, que son las naturales (según las sujetos [sic]) muy idóneos y capaces para entrar y profesar en religión, por su naturaleza constante en sus propósitos, muy observantes en las tradiciones en que las pusieron en la nueva conversión, teniendo por practicar por lo firme del ánimo, que son, que en diciendo en su idioma zemicacuilique, que quiere decir ha sido costumbre no los contrastara todo el mundo, viviendo como viven, en el santo temor de Dios, de donde infiero; son sujetos capaces para el voto solemne de la religión.*[406]

Already in the New World chronicles, from Las Casas to Torquemada, the fear of an atavistic pagan historical memory can be identified and the only solution to this cultural problem is that of exchanging the old custom for a new one: straight substitution. Nevertheless, the field of custom, of *zemilcacuilique*, was clearly a fluid one, and if it so readily changed from pagan to Christian, it might just as easily change

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[405] Bernand & Gruzinski (1992)142 Gruzinski and Bernand's formulation is clearly indebted to the work of Pierre Bourdieu and his notions of the quotidian and what he expresses as the *habitus*. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990)

[406] [I conclude by stating that Indian women (depending on each individual) are fitted to and capable of professing as nuns. By nature they are constant of purpose, being very observant of the traditions of their new faith. They practise them, showing their firmness of purpose by calling them *zemicacuilique* which in their language means, *it is customary*. Nothing compares to them and to how they live in Godly fear, from which I infer they are subjects capable of taking the solemn vows of religion.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

back. This fear of the fluidity of the field of cultural practices and customs is in great part responsible for the obsession with purity that many of the writings of the period display. It is most certainly why the planned convent is reserved for 'pure' Indian women, and why idolatry is often written of metaphorically as a disease, for only in this way could its promiscuous spread to sectors of the population who were not Indian be expressed..[407]

The foundation of a convent for noble Indian women was considered by certain of the priestly commentators as a just ending to the evangelical enterprise which Spain had embarked on. The success of effective communication with the Indians would be illustrated by their conversion to the Word, an irrefutable indication of the establishment of Christianity in a place where idolatry reigned before. For other commentators, the evangelical enterprise was nowhere near its end however, and the education of the Indians by no means a certain success. Thus, Alejandro Romano's references to the Indian past involves an acknowledgement of the strength of this history and its resistance to the Spanish 'present'. It is all the more revealing that Romano should choose the notion of community and urban living, for the city in classical thought was indeed, 'a quasi-mystical union of men, a means to a state of perfection'.[408] Women *qua* women would have found it difficult to establish a community, so Romano's deriding of the Aztec civilisation as 'little kingdoms' and his reference to the nomadic Indian tribes is designed to emphasise *Indian* women's double disenfranchisement from the establishment of any community:

> *Primeramente, no tienen natural para poder vivir en comunidad, como lo manifiesta su modo antiguo y presente de vivir, pues antes de la venida de nuestra Santa Fe a estas tierras (quitados los que vivían en compañía de sus Reyezuelos) los demás moraban en los montes, y en rancherías pequeñas como aún acostumbran los gentiles, los cuales, aunque después del santo bautismo, a costa de mucho trabajo de sus Ministros se hayan reducido, se vayan reduciendo a pueblos, siempre han conservado y conservan en gran parte su natural disposición a la vida asociable e incivil; pues cada uno fabrica su casa bien distante de la del otro, lo puede haber de una de estas dos razones, o por que no tienen paciencia y providencia para sufrir, y [a] mular [sic] alguna molestia de vecino, o para que no sean notadas sus acciones; o por lo uno, o por lo otro, que es lo más verosímil. Y si el natural de los Indios es tal que no puede sufrir el vivir uno al lado de otro ¿cómo podrán acostumbrarse las Indias a vivir juntas en una casa expuesta cada una a la vista de todas que le noten sus*

[407] Cf. Bernand & Gruzinski (1992)140.

[408] Pagden (1982)135. Cf. Las Casas's concern to show that Indian communities fulfilled Aristotle's system of civic organisation and thus possessed the full potential for civility.

acciones para que se las corrija su Prelada, y obligada a asimilar y a sufrir las molestias de todas?[409]

In Romano's experience, the Indians have resisted living in the communities the missionaries have established for them and he ascribes this to their uncivilised state, making it clear it renders them unable to govern themselves. The circularity of this logic is striking: the notion of a community of Indian women is unthinkable because of their inability to govern, an action which in turn constitutes the creation of a community.

In some measure, the opponents of the foundation seem to be admitting that the evangelical project had, in some measure, failed; or at least to be acknowledging the immense difficulties of it and the considerable cultural confusions and complexities it produced. In contrast, the proponents of the foundation are quick to publish the success of evangelisation. Antonio Pérez for example, exclaims that the imposition of Catholicism has been so successful that the Indies are full of potential saints. His metaphors constantly refer to firmness and resoluteness, with the intention of combating the notion of inconstancy in the Indians which could be compounded in this case by the more usual association of femininity with caprice:

> *¡Oh fe santa! ¿Oh santo Dios! Y cómo se engrandece tu gloria entre estos miserables, pues cogieron con tanto amor tu ley que ellas principalmente son las primeras en las doctrinas, en las cuentas, en las congregaciones, en la misa y en acudir al cumplimiento de Cristianas. Muy fieles en su obligación, y en esto sólo con el continuo cultivo de la doctrina Cristiana [...] Luego razón será por útil a sus almas, bien a su república, y consuelo espiritual suyo, el que se les conceda el ingreso en clausura porque si sólo con el ejercicio de la doctrina Cristiana viven como vemos ¿qué se aguarda de su constancia, fidelidad y firmeza en que siempre viven, cultivadas con la oración, meditación y contemplación con que se ejercitan en los monasterios? ¿Qué se aguarda? Un catálogo de santas. Ojalá la publique la fama para que en tiempo de nuestro Felipe bajen la cerviz las glorias de Macedonia y se elevan y sublimen las de España.*[410]

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[409] [Firstly, they have no disposition to live in communities, as is shown by their ancient and present way of living, for before the arrival of our holy faith in these lands, they all lived on mountains and ranches, except for those ruled by their petty kings. They were like the gentiles and even after baptism and an enormous amount of work by religious ministers to make them live in towns, they continue in great part to keep to their asocial and uncivil ways. Each builds a house far from the other. There can only be two reasons for this, or they have no patience or perseverance to endure any disturbance from their neighbour or they do not want their behaviour to be noticed, this latter being the most likely reason. If this is the natural disposition of the Indians, unable to live next to each other, how will Indian women accustom themselves to living in the same house, exposed to each other's gaze so that all their actions are known and can be disciplined by the Abbess, and they have also to endure the bother of all their neighbours?] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

[410] [Oh holy Faith! Oh saintly God! How your glory is magnified amongst these miserable people, for they have taken up your law with such love. The women are the first in doctrinal matters and prayers, in church attendance, in celebrating mass and in keeping all the Christian duties. They are obedient to every order and this is achieved only through the teaching of the Christian doctrine. That they be allowed into the

The summum of this view of the evangelical enterprise as success is given by Antonio de Miranda who presents it in all its truly imperialistic glory, envisaging the convent as confirming the imposition of religious, cultural, political and economic norms:

> *Digo que supuesto su congrua sustentación, no hallo inconveniencia alguna. Antes sí, en lo espiritual, el bien de que gente tan devota emplee su natural inclinación en el culto y servicio de Dios, siendo su divina Majestad alabado con las voces que proferirán unos corazones puros. También, deduciendo lo político a lo espiritual, veo que será de gran gloria a nuestro Católico monarca y nación Española, pues con su invicto brazo y santo celo, no sólo se verá y dirá que redujo tan bárbara nación al suave yugo de nuestra santa fe, haciendo que obedeciera sus preceptos y los observara, sino también que lo ha conducido con sus buenos ministros y ejemplos a la perfección de abrazar los consejos evangélicos; mostrándose en esta acción agradecida pues por el material oro que esta tierra le tributó, le ha dado y da el finísimo e incorruptible de la caridad y demás virtudes; que según la experiencia que tengo, ejercitarán en su religioso convento las dichas naturales, que como supongo, serán las más nobles, no digo de su capacidad, porque la supongo, esto estando como están, muy expeditas en la lengua castellana y en todo lo demás de disciplina que conduce para dicho estado.*[411]

In a remarkable conflation of the material, political, and religious stakes of the colonial enterprise, Miranda explains that Spain will not only garner the military glory of such a stupendous conquest but in her mercy as imperial power, she will redistribute the profit more than equitably, exchanging the gold the Indies provide for the inestimable wealth of the Christian religion.

From Confession to Ethnography

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cloister will be useful for their souls, good for their people and for its spiritual consolation, for if but by exercising Christian virtue they live as has been described, what marvels can be expected of their constancy, fidelity and firmness of purpose when cultivated by the prayer, meditation and contemplation of a convent? A roll call of saints! Hopefully their fame will be made public so that in our Philip's reign the glories of Macedonia may be brought low and those of Spain rise and be sublime.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

[411] [Given that their financial well-being is provided for, I cannot find any inconvenience. Rather, I find great spiritual benefit that a people so devout should be able to put their natural inclination to work in the service of God, the Lord thus being praised by the voices proffered by such pure hearts. Reading the political from the spiritual, I also see it will bring great glory to our Catholic Majesty and to the Spanish Nation for it will be seen that such a barbarian people were reduced to the gentle yoke of our holy faith with his invincible arm and holy zeal. It will be evident that they have not only been made to obey the precepts of the Faith and to observe them, but that with his good ministers and pious examples of perfection, the King has led them to embrace the evangelical precepts. This action will be seen to be beneficial, for in exchange for the gold this land has given as tribute, it will receive the incorruptible wealth of Charity and the other virtues which, given my experience, I am sure the Indian women will exercise in their convent, they being, as I suppose, noble women. I speak not of their capacity, for it is a given, being as advanced in their knowledge of Spanish and of the discipline necessary for such an estate as they are.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 f37r.

In their testimonies these men are requested to reflect, in their professional capacity as priests and confessors, on the feasibility of founding a convent for Indian women. The men are chosen precisely because of their privileged relation to the Indian community: they minister to these women. Thus, the very request for information is built on the premise that the real relation between confessor and confessant, priest and congregation, will provide knowledge inaccessible in any other way. The knowledge these priests may have is of many different kinds however, some of which are more communicable than others. Obviously, the information passing between confessant and confessor falls into the category of a kind of knowledge protected from communication and diffusion because of the confidentiality of the sacrament. Nevertheless, this is precisely what these priests are called upon to do: to communicate and diffuse their special knowledge of Indian women. It is interesting in this light to recall the analogy Carlo Ginzburg has made between the work of the Inquisitor and that of the anthropologist.[412] It may be said that the confessor's relation to his confessants is of the same order and shares, by virtue of the 'dialogic' structure underlying the 'evidence' produced as knowledge - the conversations held in the confessional - what Ginzburg calls an 'anthropological attitude'. Clearly, in the colonial context, the anthropological paradigm is even more striking than in the European witchcraft trials which Ginzburg is describing.[413]

In part, the securing of authority for their personal testimony is achieved very simply (if tautologously) by the priests, through the affirmation of their personal experience. Thus, Antonio Pérez contests the vulgar commonplaces about Indians by saying that his personal experience has shown him they are mistaken:

> *Que sea la condición del voto promesa de Dios, deduzco lo que tengo dicho del Santo temor de Dios, viviendo en él como viven, que aunque dicen ser gente sin temor, honor y vergüenza [...] no siendo cierto lo que el vulgo dice en todos, que viven sin vergüenza y sin temor, constándome a mi como su ministro lo contrario, teniendo en esta mi feligresía indias muy honradas y temerosas de ambas Majestades.*[414]

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[412] Carlo Ginzburg, 'The Inquisitor as Anthropologist' in *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992)156-64.

[413] Cf. the consequent resonance of Ginzburg's description of the 'anthropological attitude'; "The essence of what we call anthropological attitude - that is, the permanent confrontation between different cultures - rests on a dialogic disposition." Ginzburg (1992)159.

[414] [That the requirements for taking vows are a gift of God's, I deduce from what I have said about Godly fear, that they live in it, though it is said they are people without fear, honour or shame {...} what people say is not true, that they all live without shame or fear. The contrary is apparent to me as their minister, having in my congregation very honourable Indian women, fearful of both their God and their King] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

However, the simplicity of assuring truth in this way works only if all parties are willing to acknowledge the novelty of the situation and the need for an expert precisely because the field of knowledge is relatively unknown. Behind Pérez's assertion, the New World's 'newness' also affirms itself.

A more sophisticated version of this authorising strategy is apparent in the various objective accounts of specific Indian women and of the institutions in which they have displayed their virtue and capacity for professing as nuns. Thus, Pérez describes a school for Indian girls which seems to be a *de facto* convent. At the end of his description however, the factual tone is abandoned in favour of a strongly emotive and personal account of how the Indian women's chaste behaviour amazes him, leaving him at a conceptual loss. This comment, clearly directed at an equal (a man, a Spaniard) is meant to create a sense of complicity between Pérez and his reader, securing belief for the former's information:

> *En esta jurisdicción de Santiago de Tlatelolco hay muchísimas congregantes del colegio de San Gregorio, con la advocación de Nuestra Señora de Loreto, que con grande esmero y celo tienen los muy reverendos Padres de la Compañía de Jesús, en que las más congregantes son doncellas habiendo hecho voto de castidad, promesa Dios Nuestro Sr. mediante la Purísima María del Loreto, mi señora, viviendo éstas tan abstraídas de lo mundano en las casillas de sus moradas que parecen no haber tales niñas en su edad - mucha compostura, en el hablar modestia y en su voluntad mucha obediencia, que aún estando en el siglo confundirán a las más observantes religiosas. Siendo su número de más de sesenta las de mi jurisdicción y su edad que la menor no llega a los veinte, pasando hasta los cuarenta, cosa que aunque me sirve de descanso al verlas, me aumenta la confusión a mi estado el ver unas niñas que, sin obligación a la mayor perfección, estén con gran perfección.*[415]

The distance from the classical hagiographic model this kind of experiential account measures is perhaps best illustrated by the testimony of Joseph de Ribera who writes about one of his Indian confessants, Joana de la Concepción, who lived in the convent of Sta. Isabel. Ribera, instead of retelling her *Vida*, asserts his personal

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[415] [In this jurisdiction of Santiago de Tlatelolco there are many members of the congregation who are in St. Gregory's school, which is dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto, which, with great effort and zeal, is managed by the Jesuit fathers. Many of the women of the congregation there are virgins, having made a vow of chastity with the aid of Our Lady of Loreto and they live so removed from the worldly, in their little houses, that they do not seem to be girls of their age. So much tact, in their speech so modest and in their will, only abject obedience - so much so that, being in the world, the most fervent could be mistaken for nuns. There are more than sixty in my jurisdiction and the youngest is not even twenty, the oldest forty, and seeing them, though it is a comfort to me, also increases my confusion in my estate, seeing young girls who have no obligation to fulfil the greatest perfection, living with such total perfection.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

knowledge, concentrating on the fact that Joana passed her entire life in the convent and was educated by the Spanish nuns there. The status of these Spanish women as witnesses, able to confirm Joana's virtue because of their own assured spiritual and cultural orthodoxy, is emphasised by the fact that they are named in Ribera's testimony. Moreover, the virtue of the other Indian women is also legitimated by the testimony Spanish nuns responsible for their education give of them. The emphasis on education and authoritative recommendation as coming from a culturally and spiritually orthodox source (a Spanish nun) makes clear that the Indian women's 'Indianness' is under particular scrutiny, their spiritual quality being dependent on the value assigned to their 'race':

> *Certifico yo, Fray Joseph de Ribera, Padre y Vicario en el convento de Sras. religiosas Descalzas de Sta. Isabel de esta Ciudad de México, haber conocido, muchos años confesado, y haber dispuesto in articulo mortis a Joana de la Concepción, India, quien se crió desde sus tiernos años en este dicho Convento, sirviéndole a la Reverenda Madre Isabel de Sta. Clara y murió en él de edad de más de ochenta. Así mismo, por noticia que tengo de religiosas ancianas y graves, haberse criado y muerto en este convento otras indias, como fue una, nombrada María, que sirvió a una religiosa lega llamada María de San Blas. Otra nombrada Nicolaza a quien crió la Reverenda Madre Josepha de San Juan. Otra que crió la Reverenda Madre Ambrosía de San Pedro nombrada Nicolaza. Otra que crió la Reverenda Madre Josepha de San Andrés, nombrada Magdalena. Otra que crió la Reverenda Madre María de San Antonio, nombrada María de la Cruz. Otra que crió la Reverenda Madre María de Jesús, nombrada María de la Trinidad. Y otras muchas, unas que se han criado desde sus tiernos años y han muerto en el convento, otras que aunque no se han criado en el convento sino que han entrado ya grandes, han perseverado hasta morir y algunas que están niñas que están perseverando en el convento desde sus tiernos años hasta la presente, y certifico esto para y donde convenga.*[416]

[416] [I, brother Joseph de Ribera, Priest and Vicar of the convent of Discalced nuns of St. Isabel of this city of Mexico, certify that I have known, shriven for many years and given the last rites to Joana de la Concepción, an Indian, who was brought up from her earliest years in the said convent, serving the Reverend Mother Isabel de Sta. Clara, and who died being more than eighty years old. Also, concerning information I have from senior and dignified nuns about Indians who have been brought up and died in this convent such as one named María who served a lay sister called María de San Blas. Another was called Nicolaza and was brought up by the Reverend Mother Josepha de San Juan. Another brought up by the Reverend Mother Ambrosía de San Pedro was called Nicolaza. Another brought up by the Reverend Mother Josepha de San Andrés was called Magdalena. Another brought up by the Reverend Mother María de San Antonio was called María de la Cruz. Another brought up by the Reverend Mother María de Jesús was called María de la Trinidad. And many more who have been brought up from their earliest age and have died in the convent and others who though not brought up in the convent but who have entered as adults have persevered until their death and some who have been here since their childhood have persevered in this convent from their earliest years until the present and I certify this for whatever purpose it may serve.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated. See also Antonio Torres's testimony which lists more Indian nuns in Sta Clara. In this case, he gives both first name and surname as well as their age, prefacing all with the title *Doña*. These six nuns are clearly from the Indian élite; *seis naturales caciques* (six principal Indians) AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

Clearly, this strategy can also be used to disqualify Indian women from profession as nuns. Having put forward the classic and philosophically respectable argument that Indians were inconstant and lacking in spiritual fortitude, Joseph María de Guevarra caps his argument with an anecdote from his personal experience, moving the force of his reasoning from the general to the specific:

> *Bien se probó esta mutabilidad en una de las que pretendían ser recibidas en el nuevo convento que se pretende fundar; porque ésta no sólo ha tomado y a la hora de ésta, otro estado (lo cual no me hace tanta fuerza, que quizá lo ha hecho porque se ha dilatado mucho tiempo la licencia que se procura) sino que, aún muy a los principios de su pretensión, y teniendo ya el nombramiento para ser admitida a su tiempo, y mostrando por entonces grandes deseos de conseguirlo. El que gobernaba su alma, la puso en casa de un señora muy virtuosa y recogida, para que allí se fuera ensalando [sic] al modo de vida que después había de observar y a muy pocos días, no pudiendo guardar tanto recogimiento, ni atarearse a los ejercicios devotos que la dicha Señora le enseñaba, se volvió a su propia casa*[417]

The recourse to the personal authentication of general propositions reaches its acme in Alexandro Romano's surprisingly ingenuous testimony. Romano presents the lack of intelligence Indians suffer from as a given and then puts forward his personal failure to communicate the Truth to his congregation as proof of this - seemingly completely unaware of the less generous interpretation which would impute his failure only to his own inability! Clearly, the complicity which the testifying priests believed to exist between themselves and their audience is enough to cancel the thought of this possibility:

> *Siendo pues notorio que el entendimiento de las Indias es cortísimo, es también manifiesto que son incapaces para bien meditar de sí mismas las verdades eternas [...] me lo ha enseñado la experiencia de treinta años que las manejo; pues por diligencias que he hecho para enseñarlas el modo de meditar, todas han salido vanas y sin fruto.*[418]

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[417] [This mutability was proved in one of the (women) who hoped to be received in the new convent proposed. Because she has not only at this time taken another estate (i.e. married) (which is not so surprising to me, perhaps she did it because of the length of time it is taking to get the licence) but that, even at the beginning of her attempt and having been named to be admitted at the right time, and showing at that moment in time great desire to achieve it, her confessor put her in the house of a very virtuous and contemplative woman so that she could begin preparing herself for the style of life she would have to observe afterwards and after a few days, unable to maintain such abstraction or to occupy herself with the devotions the said woman taught her, she returned to her own house.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

[418] [It being well known that the intellect of Indian women is very small, it is clear that they are incapable of meditating on the eternal truths by themselves. More than thirty years' experience of dealing with them has taught me this, for every effort I have made to teach them the ways of meditation has been in vain and had no success.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 f33v.

Having linked the authority of the testimony to the subjective experience it represents, there remains the problem of classification. Not only does the priest have to decide what knowledge it is licit to communicate, he has also to decide which knowledge is generally applicable, and which is useful only in subjective terms. Given the obviously personal nature of the confessional relationship and the onus on these testifying priests to produce a general discourse from it (one, that is, which would either recommend or condemn the foundation as an enterprise directed at the Indian female population as a whole), it is clear that the testimonies hold great interest as documents which exhibit the tensions implicit in an attempt to produce an objective discourse based on personal observation and knowledge rather than on received tradition. It should not be forgotten that in this period the established means of proving the virtue of spiritual women was provided by hagiography. The fact that none of these priests makes the least use of hagiographic form in their testimonies is one of the most telling, and straightforward, indications that the New World context required a different kind of representation.

In this sense, the testimonies provide magnificent examples of 'dialogic' accounts. They are representations of the colonial context which, when confronted with the absolute difference and reality of the New World, are unable to reproduce a 'monologic' image of universality, be it theological, political or cultural. Precisely because of this, I will argue, they have a privileged access to this reality.[419] Antonio Pérez's testimony provides a complete example of how complex these tensions can be. In his writing they are resolved into a style of reporting which moves continuously from tradition to commonplace to personal experience in order to produce an authoritative opinion. It is, of course, in the moments of transition between these styles that the insights into the cultural context Ginzburg attributes to the 'dialogic' text can be glimpsed. Pérez begins by generalising about the Indian population of the colony and then moves swiftly onto the exceptions to these universal rules:

> *Que son las nacionales de este septentrional de Nueva España (hablando en lo genérico de ellas) muy pobres, muy humildes, muy recogidas y muy cortas de espíritu. Pues por su pusilanimidad no se atreven a emprender empresas admirables, siendo su mayor deuda la omisión - hija de la cortedad de animo.*

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[419] Cf. Ginzburg on the rejection of the 'referential fallacy' by historians and his own optimism that 'dialogic' sources may still hold information about "something which we must call *faute de mieux* 'eternal reality'". Ginzburg (1992)161. I would argue that the historiography of the New World enjoys a particularly revealing relation to this 'eternal reality' and its representation in writing. On the rise of an experimental scientific methodology in the period see Pagden (1982)5.

Pero no careciendo, por éso, de ser sujetos muy capaces, idóneos y aplicados, para cualesquiera obras espirituales ...[420]

He goes on to allude to theories of bodily humours as well as to the 'strong women' biblical tradition (Judith, Deborah etc.), and makes clear that he considers Indian women included in the grace God can dispense to the frailer sex in order to make it capable of heroic acts. The slippage between a scholarly disquisition on sexual difference, backed up by biblical precedents, and the examples necessary to promote the virtue of women who are racially different, is evident in his writing:

> *Menos mala es la frialdad del hombre que la bobedad de la mujer. General es la proposición, pero como no hay regla sin excepción [...]. están completas las historias de varoniles Mujeres que excedieron en santidad, virtud y fortaleza a la mayor parte del hombre, dedicando sus vidas por víctimas de su alma, ofrecían firmes sus cuerpos a lo fuerte de una clausura, a lo duro de un cuchillo, de fogoso de las llamas por no declinar contra su dueño y siendo esto así como es, son excepción de la regla las buenas, pues con la Gracia de Dios no hay imposibles.*[421]

It is in writing about Indian family organisation, however, that we can see how these two types of legitimating discourse lead Pérez to the absurd:

> *... hablando con la práctica de cura maestro de Indias en la experiencia de diez y siete años de administración, digo que entre uno y otro sexo, siendo ellos buenos, son mejores ellas por ser más humildes. Más pobres, más recogidas, más trabajadoras, pues las que casadas son, me consta, generalmente hablando, que del sudor y trabajo de su rostro, mantienen, sustentan, visten y cuidan a sus esposos.*[422]

Here, Pérez presents a 'strong' Indian woman who is a transvestite Adam, forced by the power of the priest's rhetoric into working with the sweat of her brow to feed, clothe and maintain herself, her family and her weak husband. In his wish to exalt the strength and virtue of Indian women Pérez reverses the sexually differentiated

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[420] [The indigenous peoples of this region of New Spain (and I speak generically of the women) are very poor, very humble, very respectable and very submissive {lit. lacking in spirit}. Their pusillanimity prevents them from doing things worthy of admiration, their greatest sin being that of omission, which is born of an unfirm spirit. Despite this, they are still very capable subjects, ideal for and fitted to any spiritual work.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

[421] [The coldness of man is better than the foolishness of woman. This is a general rule, but as there is no rule without an exception {...} the Histories are full of strong women who exceeded the majority of men in sanctity, virtue and fortitude, giving their lives as victims for their souls, resolutely offering their bodies to the strength of the cloister, the terrors of the knife, the burning of the flames so as not to disappoint their Owner. And this being as it is, the virtuous are the exception to the rule, for thanks to the Grace of God, nothing is impossible.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

[422] [Speaking with the experience of seventeen years of administration as a priest and teacher in the Indies, I can say that comparing one sex with the other, the men being good, the women are more so, because they are more humble. They are also poorer, more circumspect and more hard-working, for those women who are married, and generally speaking I can vouch for this, through the sweat and labour of their brow, maintain, feed, clothe and look after their husbands.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

effects of the Fall, revealing their universality to be in fact rhetorically manipulable when confronted with a 'different' reality; that of the miserable lives of the Indigenous population and the consequent toil forced upon Indian women in order to keep their families alive.

Perhaps the greatest stereotype of the Indian in the period, or at least the one which condensed all the others, was the supposed lack of intelligence. This notion had both positive and negative interpretations; on the one hand, the Noble Savage promoted an image of the Indian as the great Innocent (with obvious implications for his spiritual capabilities), and on the other there was the Barbarian of idolatrous practices whose disrespect for the most basic of civilisation's taboos made him an impossible object for any recuperative enterprise. If these were the range of options open to Indian man, Indian woman was consigned to a kind of parodic extreme of both by the classic misogynist logic that cast her as the weaker sex. Though it would be exaggerated to place the testimonies of any of the priests in either of these two opposed positions, they certainly borrow from each of the images when it suits their purpose. If proving the intelligence and rational ability of Indian men was a complicated conceptual task, proving that of Indian women was doubly difficult. Not only had their advocate to battle against the images of Indians as barbarians or Noble Savages, there was also the traditional notion of *all* women, regardless of race, as foolish and irrational to contend with.

As a group, Indians and women of all races, along with idiots and some mythical creatures such as St. Anthony's faun, were credited with mimetic potential of the highest degree, but were considered incapable of totally autonomous thought; a failing which relegated them to the juridical status of minors. Thus, for Guevarra even the talent for painting displayed by the Indians is questionable, while he finds them incapable of the higher arts of theology, rhetoric and philosophy where mimetic ability is much less important:

> *En la pintura, que es una de las artes que más se parecen a las ciencias, ¿quién hay que se señale con notables ventajas y perfección, habiendo entre ellos tantos pintores? Y fuera de esto, en las facultades que necesariamente se requiere buen entendimiento, como son la Gramática, y las otras ciencias de Filosofía y Teología, habiéndose aplicado tantos a cursarlos, ¿han mostrado por ventura esta facilidad y presteza en conseguirlas?*[423]

[423] [In painting, which is of all the arts that which most resembles a science, which of them can be singled out as having notable talent and ability, there being so many painters amongst them? And outside this art, in the domains that require intellect such as grammar, philosophy and theology, though many have

Clearly, a judgement as severe as this places the whole educational dimension of evangelisation under interrogation. The distinction between mechanical ability and true ratiocination is a classification of intellectual capacity with a distinguished classical genealogy itself. Nevertheless, the force of Guevarra's argument rests on the personal experience available to anyone who spends time with the Indians, an experience which he claims will confirm the classical distinction:

> *Supongo lo cuarto, que estos pobres Naturales tienen muy corto entendimiento. Este supuesto lo conocerá cualquiera que hubiere tratado con ellos y el que tratare más y más tiempo con ellos, cada día lo conocerá mejor. Verdad es que algunos demuestran grande habilidad, aprendiendo los más oficios mecánicos con facilidad, y muy de presto; y por esto se engañan muchos teniéndoles por muy hábiles. Pero ¿quién negará que todas estas obras mecánicas no las suelen acertar de ordinario sin teniendo algún ejemplar, por donde copiarlas? Y cuando las hacen por sí solos, las echan a perder las más veces.*[424]

His description of the practical difficulties of actually teaching Christian doctrine to his congregation is also designed to emphasise the validity of his statements by attaching them to a truth occupying the unassailable ground of experience:

> *Cuando se les predica la palabra de Dios, es necesario que no sólo sean llanas y clarísimas las palabras, muy naturales y materiales los símiles, muy breves y bien distintos los períodos, sino que también es forzoso y necesario que aún en un mismo sermón se les repita una misma cosa muchas veces y que en muchos y varios sermones se les vuelva a decir casi siempre lo mismo.*[425]

By presenting Indian and popular religion as one and the same, Guevarra's testimony is in fact a synthesis of the cultural differences between Old and New World. When Guevarra represents the rational ability of the Indians as mechanical, his use of the distinction recalls the most central of Counter-Reformation arguments concerning issues of superstition, ignorance and the popular.[426] The Indians were clearly

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dedicated themselves to learning them, have any displayed perchance any aptitude or speed in mastering them?] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 f29v.

[424] [The fourth reason I allege is that these Indians have very limited intelligence. This is evident to anyone who has had dealings with them and anyone who does so continuously, day after day, will affirm it even more certainly. It is true that some display great skill in learning mechanical tasks very quickly and easily and because of this many observers are fooled into thinking them quick-witted. But who will contest that they cannot usually achieve all these mechanical arts unless they have an example from which to copy? And when they do them all alone, more often than not they ruin them?] Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 f29v.

[425] [When the Word of the Lord is preached to them, it is necessary that the words be simple and clear, the similes natural and concrete, the points made very short and well differentiated, and it is also necessary that in one sermon the same thing be repeated many times, and in different sermons it is almost always necessary to repeat the same things again and again.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 f30r-30v.

[426] See David C. Goodman, *Power and Penury: Government, Technology and Science in Philip II's Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) for the complexities of defining these terms in the period.

assimilable to the superstitious peasants of the Spanish peninsula only with the added exoticism of idolatry to enhance their possible heterodoxy. This population of idolaters and superstitious ignoramuses was a fantasy that inhabited the European imagination with tenacity.

Guevarra's advocation of the fitting type of devotion Indians are capable of is equally revealing. His description of their innocent piety is that of the devout fool, of the child, or - by logical extension - of the woman:

> *Uno de estos pobres Naturales merece más y agrada más a Dios Nuestro Señor poniéndole flores a un santo, encendiéndole sus velas, echándole su sahumerio, que si gastara muchas horas en el ejercicio tan santo de la oración mental, en la cual, sin duda, gastaría el tiempo sin provecho. Un pedazo de pan que dan de limosna, como lo suelen hacer frecuentemente, le agrada más a Nuestro Señor por la singular piedad y compasión con que lo hacen, que otros muchos actos de virtudes superiores, porque no conocen su naturaleza ni alcanzan a distinguir su perfección.*[427]

The feminization of the entire Indian spiritual potential means, of course, that Indian women are left with very little spiritual ability at all, victims once again of the double bind of sex and race.

Undoubtedly, some of the most difficult information to transmit authoritatively for these priests concerns sexual matters. Nevertheless, given that the Indian was unable to govern his or her body in a chaste manner was a strong argument against the religious profession of both Indian men and women, the material gleaned from confession was too valuable to disregard. It had instead to be presented in an acceptably authoritative and 'scientific' form. Here, the complex interrelations of power linking the priest to his Indian woman confessant are laid bare and shown to stretch from the institutional to the subjective. These men are not simply voyaging into an unknown landscape, they are entering into relationships which are both affective and subjective. Thus, the discovery of his congregation's sexual virtue is a source of personal surprise and relief to Manuel Pérez, who precisely secures the 'truth' value of his account by the very personal reaction such a discovery causes in him:

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[427] [One of these Indians is more worthy and pleases God more by giving flowers to a saint, lighting candles or blowing incense at [the saint] than if he spent many hours in the holy exercise of mental prayer, in which no doubt, he would waste the time with no profit. A piece of bread, given as an offering, which is a common thing for them, is more pleasing to the Lord, because of its singular piety and the compassion with which it is made, than any acts of higher virtue, for they would not understand their nature or be able to perceive their perfection.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 f30r. Dominique Rigaux's comments on the established notion that women had a special relation to the image are especially resonant in this context. In 'Dire la foi avec des images; une affaire des femmes?' in Delumeau Ed., (1992)70-90.

... se puede tener otro motivo que yo no lo alcance, porque aún el de que no puedan guardar el voto de la castidad, que es el que pudiera pretextarse, según mi larga experiencia es para ellas el más fácil, pues en el fuero sacramental doy gracias a Dios de ver lo difícil que son en su fracción, y no sólo difícil pero las más de las doncellas, aunque tengan ya edad capaz de malicia, parecen incapaz de inpuridad [sic], con que por camino alguno yo no hallo inconveniente en el que han de ser muy perfectas religiosas ...[428]

Antonio Pérez's testimony is of interest in this respect, for here the priest counters general arguments about the nature of the Indians by combining personal experience with a general argument also, but one distinguished by its erudition. Thus, he consults 'doctors' in order to substantiate his own opinion with the collective knowledge of experts:

Insta el discurso, que cómo podrán observar, mantener y tener en el ingreso de la religión el voto de castidad, razón que me desvelado por ser esta nación tan cálida. Y para descargo de mi conciencia, en lo que toca en lo exterior, consulté varios doctores acerca del calor de los Indios, diciendo ser calientes por naturaleza, no de natural, siendo de sanguíneo humor. [...] Luego, según esto no le obsta a las naturales de esta región el ingreso en el acto heroico de religión. Pruebo prácticamente todo lo dicho en los actos interiores del sacramento de la penitencia, y digo que no son muy frecuentes en esta culpa. Porque aunque por pecado generalmente se toma toda maldad, a los Indios les parece que sólo es pecado el que se comete carnalmente, y sólo a este le dicen tlatlacole, que quiere decir pecado. Y exortándoles en su idioma a que si tienen otro pecado que confesar, vuelven muy fervorosas y dicen No lo quiera Dios, que no lo he cometido ni quiero cometer. Y así digo, que aunque son de naturaleza cálida, son muy puras y muy castas, pues lo continuo es el no caer en tal culpa. Pues confesándolas continuamente, infinitas y sin número son las que en tal culpa no han caído.[429]

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[428] [There might be some other reason for not allowing them (to profess) that I am aware of, besides the only one that I can imagine could be put forward, that they could not keep the vow of chastity. Even this, in my experience is easy for them, because, thanks be to God, the Indians as a whole are very difficult (to corrupt) in this respect; indeed most of the young girls, though they may be at an age capable of malice, seem incapable of any impurity. Thus, I find no reason or inconvenience that would prevent them from becoming perfect nuns.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

[429] [The argument is as follows; how can they observe, maintain and keep the vow of chastity as nuns, this race (lit. nation) being as hot blooded as it is. To assuage my conscience concerning matters exterior, I consulted various doctors about the heat of the Indians. They declared the Indians to be hot because of natural circumstances, not by their very nature, they being in fact of a sanguine humour. Thus, following this, it cannot be considered an obstacle preventing the indigenous women of this region entry into the heroic life of religion. I can prove everything above through the knowledge of their interiors which I have gained through the sacrament of penitence. I can say that they sin infrequently in this manner. The word 'sin' is generally taken to mean all sorts of evil but the Indians think 'sin' is confined to carnal sin, and they only call this type of evil *tlatalcole* meaning 'sin'. Even if I ask them in their own language if they have committed any other sin which they wish to confess, they say fervently, 'God forbid! I haven't committed it nor wish to', and so I declare that even though they are of a hot nature, they are very pure and usually do not fall into such sin. I have shriven them continually and those who have not fallen into such sin are innumerable and infinite in number.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

Pérez's testimony also makes apparent the difficulty of communicating such concepts as 'sin' from one culture to another. He provides the translation of 'sin' in Nahuatl, emphasising its *untranslatability* in terms of cultural understanding, for it is clear that the Indian women of his parish have taken *tlatlacole* to mean only carnal sin. The problem of rendering abstract terms understandable to the indigenous population of their new empire had dogged the Spaniards from the first moment of the evangelising mission. In the beginning there had been an attempt to teach in indigenous languages - a project which led to the printing of various bilingual catechisms. Continual misunderstandings, probably much like the one described above, meant that this strategy was abandoned and a law in the New World codex, the *Novísima de Indias,* specifically forbade further teaching of Christian doctrine in indigenous languages.

Interestingly, Guevarra, who argues against the foundation, does not accuse Indian women of promiscuity or lasciviousness but simply of inconstancy. This fits in well with his general argument on the nature of the Indian race who, principally because of the climate of their land, he claims are incapable of resolute behaviour. Perhaps the most notable and certainly the most melancholy piece of information in Guevarra's report, is that many of the Indian women who enter Spanish convents as servants leave soon afterwards even if their lives outside the cloister are certainly poorer and more miserable than their enclosed ones. This rejection of integration, which is taken as proof of inconstancy, serves in fact as a reminder of the affective and irrational realms in which the process of acculturation also took place, realms where economic good sense had no absolute value at all:

> *Supongo lo tercero, que no sólo la mayor parte de los naturales de este reino, sino casi todos, tienen una condición muy inconstante, y una voluntad muy variable. Esta es una de las faltas más connaturales de esta nación, y aunque esto es bien conocido de todos los que los han tratado algún tiempo; Yo lo pruebo con la experiencia que tengo. Más ha de diez y seis años que me he ejercitado en ayudar a todos los Indios de esta ciudad, y sus contornos, y otros muchos de bien lejos, en confesarlos, y esto de continuo todos los días del año; y esta falta ha sido siempre la que más les ha embarazado, según lo que tengo observado, el que perseveren algún tiempo en la virtud. Mas, bien sabido es, que ofreciéndose muchas veces en esta ciudad a las otras señoras religiosas de otros conventos una criada que les sirva, y buscándose ésta aún entre las Indias que parecen mejores y de más buenas inclinaciones, a pocos días se salen las más, y es rarísima la que persevera bastante tiempo. Y esto sucede de ordinario aún con aquellas que acá fuera vivían en gran miseria, pobreza y maltratamiento de sus parientes y allá en los claustros religiosos lo pasaban con gran conveniencia, notable y diferente trato del que acá les daban los suyos. Por*

cualquiera disgustillo se arrepienten de haber entrado y después apenas han salido, se arrepienten de haber salido y así suelen andar entrando y saliendo en varios conventos.[430]

In the last section of this passage where Guevarra compares Indian and Spanish women's devotion in convents, it is clear that the authority of this statement rests on the reality of one facet of colonial society - the miserable economic existence of the Indian population. It is precisely in producing accounts which use their relation to the historical and cultural context in this way that the priestly testimonies provide what may be called information of an 'ethnographic' value.[431]

In Manuel Pérez's case, he contests the idea that Indian women lack the perseverance necessary to withstand the rigours of a Discalced rule, and his reasons are both tautologous and extremely informative about the Indian population of the colony, down to minor nutritional detail. The Indian women, we are told, will not even notice the rigour of the rule, for they already live under much greater penury and suffering:

> *Digo más, que aún más debiera temerse esta poca perseverancia de las Españolas que de las Indias. Para esto hay todas estas razones; la primera; que el no perseverar, si era porque extrañarán en el convento la falta del regalo del siglo, las Españolas por pobres que sean tienen sin comparación más regalo en sus casas que las Indias aunque éstas sean ricas, porque las Indias rara es la que come pan sino tortilla, carnero muy pocas; gallina aunque tengan muchas en sus coradillos [sic] jamás las prueban, chocolate es muy difícil sino sólo su bebida de atole. Luego si vemos que muchas Españolas perseveran y profesan en conventos de instituto muy estrechos sin echar menos el regalo de sus casas, las Indias que no tienen regalo que echar menos, ¿cómo no perseverarán?*[432]

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[430] [The third thing I allege is that the greater part, if not all, of the indigenous people of this kingdom are very inconstant by nature and have a very fickle will. This is one of the constitutional faults of this people and though well known by any who have dealt with them, I myself have experienced it personally. I have worked more than sixteen years helping the Indians of this city and its surroundings, and many from further afield by confessing them. This work has been continuous, every day of the year, and this sin (of inconstancy) has been in my opinion what has most often prevented them from advancing in virtue. It is a well known fact too that in this city when a nun needs an Indian servant many Indian women, even those chosen because they seem the best and most inclined to virtue, when they enter convents leave after only a couple of days. It is very rare for them to persevere, this even happening amongst those who here in the world live in great misery and are mistreated by their families and who in the cloister lived very comfortably and were treated very differently than out here. Even these women, for whatever tiny disappointment, regret having entered and leave; and then as soon as they have left, regret that and so they go on, entering and leaving many convents.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 f29r.

[431] Cf. Clifford Geertz's question, "What does the ethnographer do? - he writes." in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973)19.

[432] [Furthermore, the lack of perseverance on the part of the Spanish women should be much more of a worry than that of the Indian women and there are many reasons for this. Firstly, that if not persevering is linked to missing the comforts of the world when in the cloister, the Spanish women, however poor they may be, have incomparably more luxury in their houses than the Indian women, though these be rich. It is very rare for an Indian woman to eat bread, rather they eat *tortilla*, very few eat lamb, and though many

The reasoning that Indian women will prove themselves capable of the sacrifices demanded by the Discalced rule because they already lead miserably deprived lives is one repeated in many of the testimonies.[433] It presents a near perfect example of what I mean by the 'dialogic' quality of this source. It attempts to conflate the specificity of the colonial context with the universality of virtue in a rhetorical style which cannot accomplish this reconciliation, but instead provides information, in a radically new style, about the reality of the colony's difference.

The problem of alcoholism among the Indian population in New Spain was an acknowledged facet of this late colonial reality and clearly a consequence of the acculturation of the Indians.[434] In the testimonies of the priests, the reality of Indian alcoholism and the clear connection between its increase and the christianisation of the Indian population is presented as a fact but, crucially, this is done only in order to emphasise the abstinence of Indian women from alcohol:

> *Comúnmente hablando, son tenidos los naturales por muy ebrios, siendo este vicio raíz de muchas maldades, que hablo en él con grandísima distinción. Porque aunque en la gentilidad de estos naturales se castigaba este vicio con pena de la vida y a la hembra que borracha apresaban la infamaban con toda su descendencia, y siendo hoy cierto en su cristianismo lo desenfrenado con que viven por este vicio, ellas de ninguna manera lo beben, constándome en su vida interior que la que por necesidad, preñez o enfermedad ha bebido, se acusa de ello en la confesión con gran multitud de lágrimas como si hubieran cometido un grandísimo pecado. Háme sucedido el reprender a algunas casadas por haber visto alguna frecuencia en la embriaguez y responder el no ser culpa suya sino violencia de algunos imprudentes maridos que han salido llevar [sic] a la taberna, con empujones, puñadas y violencia. Luego, aunque el vulgo las tenga por ebrias, a mí como su pastor me consta el no serlos, luego no es condición que les pueda impedir el voto de religión.*[435]

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have chickens in their yards, not one Indian woman ever tastes any. Nor do they drink any chocolate, but instead drink *atole* (a very bitter herb drink). Thus, if we take note that many Spanish women enter convents of a very strict rule and persevere in them, without missing the comfort of their houses, how could it be other than that the Indian women who are without any such comforts should also persevere?] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

[433] Cf. Felipe de Abarca's testimony: *Que no las hará fuerza la descalzés por estar habituadas a padecerla desde su niñés su continuo ayuno, porque de ordinario su mantenimiento es una cosa muy común* [The Discalced rule will not pose problems {to these Indian women} because they are used to suffering from childhood, neither will the continual fasts {be a problem} because usually they nourish themselves with very little.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

[434] Sonia Corcuera de Mancera, *El fraile, el indio y el pulque: evangelización y embriaguez en la Nueva España* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1992).

[435] [The Indians are commonly considered drunkards, this vice being at the root of many evils which is why I pick it out specifically. Before their conversion to Christianity, this vice was punishable by death and the woman found drunk would be captured and her shame passed on to all her descendants. Now, in their Christian state, the depravity in which they live is clear, but it is apparent that no woman drinks. From confession, it is clear to me that any woman who drinks from necessity, being pregnant or ill, accuses herself of the sin with many tears, as if she had committed some terrible fault. I have had to chastise some

Antonio Pérez's testimony provides an excellent example of the dialogic quality of many of these accounts. His general argument about the virtue of Indian men and women explodes in several directions at once. There is an historicist review of the traditional use of alcohol in Indian society and the changes wrought by contact with the Spaniards, a semi-scientific description of the medicinal uses of alcohol considered to be licit, and the revelation of the violence Indian women were subject to from their husbands. This kind of densely textured narrative captures perfectly the transformation of intimate confessional knowledge into general information, and of theoretical assertion into contextualised personal account, which I have attempted to illustrate in this chapter.

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married women who were drunk on various occasions, but they replied it was not their fault, but that their imprudent and violent husbands forced them to go to the taverns, pushing and punching them violently. Though the public considers them drunkards, I as their priest know they are not so, and thus it cannot be forwarded as a reason to impede their access to religion.] AGN Hist. Vol. 109 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

Chapter 6: The Exemplary Cloister on Trial: San José in the Inquisition.

The Documentary Sources

In this chapter, the New Spanish Carmelite convent of San José, which in the various chronicles examined in Chapter 2. had the virtue of its inhabitants and the perfection of its cloister immortalised, finds itself on trial for heresy in the Inquisition. Although there is no final verdict and the trial, like so many other Inquisition trials in the New World, remains inconclusive and its documentation truncated, I will argue that what records exist provide a fascinating counter history to the chronicles of the convent. The fact that two such extreme versions of life in San José are available is extraordinary, and offers the possibility of illustrating both the fragile nature of orthodoxy, spiritual and cultural, in the New World, as well as of highlighting the uncertainty surrounding the adequacy of the traditional forms used to represent it.

In 1661 the Archbishop of Mexico City, Mateo de Burqueiro, wrote a letter to the Holy Office concerning the Carmelites where he 'led it to be understood that the nuns held various erroneous and heretical ideas'.[436] This explosive letter, of which there is no copy in the Inquisition file, initiated the trial of the convent. The only documents from the Archbishop extant in the file are two letters, one written in 1657 and one in 1659, both concerning the appointment of confessors in San José. In the letter of 1657, the Archbishop discusses the virtue of non-Carmelite confessors while in the later one he justifies the appointment of confessors who are not Carmelites to positions in San José. From the rest of the documentation in the file, it becomes clear that the controversy

[436] *daba a entender se tenía por las religiosas algunos errores y herejías.* Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Ramo Inquisición 581 Exp 1 Title. Hereafter, AGN Inq. A table of contents of the documents included in the Inquisition file can be found in Appendix III. It would have been hard for the Inquisition to refuse a request for an investigation from an archbishop but, certainly in America, by no means impossible. In his chapter on the Inquisition's relation to the regular clergy, Greenleaf makes clear that on the initiative of the Inquisitor Archbishop Montúfar, the regular clergy lost power in the colony. Greenleaf insists, however, that this did not mean that the Inquisition was simply the tool of the episcopacy. In theory it was an independent religious institution, able to act impartially in cases involving both branches of the priesthood. Richard Greenleaf, *The Mexican Inquisition of the Sixteenth Century* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969)152-57.

concerns the government of the convent and whose authority it comes under - in this case, either that of the Carmelite fathers or that of the Archbishop.[437]

For the purposes of the Inquisition however, which ostensibly had no interest in these institutional issues and was concerned only with matters of faith, the controversy centres on the issue of confessors precisely because the devotion to the Carmelite rule displayed by several of the nuns (and thus their allegiance to the male branch of the order) had supposedly led them to hold heretical ideas about the spiritual capacities and jurisdiction of other religious orders. The Inquisition file also contains various letters written by these nuns asking for Carmelite confessors. Other letters written by the same group of nuns during 1657 and 1659, and which are connected to their attempt to place the convent under the authority of the male Carmelites, are also included in the file. From a letter addressed to the Archbishop by different group of nuns in the convent in May 1660, in which they warn him about these attempts to subvert his authority, it is evident that the community in San José is divided.

The situation inside the convent and its relation with the Archbishop seems to have come to a head extremely quickly. On the 23 January 1661, Andrea de San Francisco wrote a letter denouncing the nuns who favoured the male Carmelites. She gave this to her confessor, Luis Becerra, who came before the Inquisition formally on the 27th. He brought not only her letter, but letters by two other nuns, Teresa de Jesús and María de los Angeles. Meanwhile, on the 24th, Margarita de San Bernardo, one of the leading nuns of the pro-Carmelite group, requested a Carmelite confessor. On the day following Luis Becerra's formal denunciation of them, the members of this pro-Carmelite faction wrote to the King asking for his support. In less than a month, the affair had escalated from an internal ecclesiastical wrangle to a fully-fledged political conflict involving Church and Crown authorities in both the Old World and the New.

Throughout the month of February, the interrogation of witnesses took place. On certain days, (1,4,7,10) Andrea de San Francisco, the leading defender of the Archbishop in the convent and a key witness in the case, was interrogated along with Becerra - no doubt to compare their evidence. Some of the other nuns were interrogated on the same days, forming groups of two and three. Towards the end of

[437] For a review of Canon law concerning the government of convents see Micheline Pontenay de Fontette, *Les Religieuses à l'âge classique du droit canon* (Paris: Vrin, 1960).

the month, on 21 February, the nuns supporting Carmelite authority presented a communal letter against Andrea de San Francisco.

Becerra's interrogation continued during the month of February and then through March and April. The truncated file ends with a request from Becerra to be released from the Inquisition's prison. No further documents relating to this episode of San José's history are to be found in the catalogue of the Inquisition files. The matter remained unresolved in terms of an Inquisitorial verdict, but as in so many of the administrative and bureaucratic stalemates of colonial government, this implied an effective victory for one party; in this case the Archbishop who had accused the nuns and who clearly retained his authority over them and their convent.[438]

The Transmission of Forms

It is extraordinary to find the Carmelite convent of San José in the Mexican Inquisition, accused of heresy. Trials for heresy against an institution rather than an individual were rare, and the idea that doctrinal error was to be found in one of the showpieces of the colonial state must have been deeply shocking. A letter by one of the founding mothers is something of a masterpiece when it comes to expressing the surprise the Carmelites themselves, as champions of the vigour and purity of the Counter-Reformation Church, feel on finding themselves in conflict with ecclesiastical authority. Mariana de la Encarnación repeats the commonplace of the Carmel as the most obedient and orthodox of the women's orders:

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[438] Cf. Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500 - c.1800* (London: Yale University Press, 1995) on the extensive discussions about the difficulties of administering far-flung colonies undertaken by contemporary theoreticians of empire. Although many scholarly works routinely mention the constraints of distance and time on the smooth government of the Indies, a substantial study of these factors remains to be done. The Mexican Carmelites' uncomfortable relation with ecclesiastic authority was to continue in the eighteenth century. The convent of Sta. Teresa la Nueva, which was founded by nuns from San José, came into conflict with José Lanciego y Eguilaz, a Benedictine Archbishop appointed in 1713. Lanciego y Eguilaz resolved his disagreement with the nuns in a drastic manner by deposing the prioress, imprisoning her in San José and eventually (in a manner reminiscent of how Ana de Jesús was sent to found convents in the Netherlands by the Spanish ecclesiastical authorities) despatching her to Cuba as a founding mother for the island's first Carmelite convent. Cf. Manuel Ramos Medina, 'Monjas sumisas pero justas' in *Ier Congreso internacional del monacado femenino en España, Portugal y América: 1492 - 1992* (León: Universidad de León, 1993)155-162.

> *... las descalzas nos preciamos tanto de obedientes y rendidas a nuestros prelados que no admitiéramos en ésto malas doctrinas, que tuviera quien las tuviese ...*[439]

The situation is perhaps even more disturbing if the other public manifestations of San José as the darling of the New Spanish church are considered. In both the printed version, *Parayso Occidental*, and the manuscript versions of its chronicle, the cordial relations between convent and episcopate are emphasised. In all the turmoil of the foundation of San José, the nuns are supported by the Archbishop, Pérez de la Serna, who displays his favour on every possible opportunity. As Archbishop, he names Sta. Teresa patron saint of the city - an unmistakably public sign of his affection for the Carmelites. Clearly, something must have turned very sour in the relation between the convent hierarchy and the episcopate.

The founding mother can only bring herself to speculate that San José has either been lacking in providence or overrun by ignorance; *faltó la providencia o sobró la ignorancia.*[440] This chapter does not intend to find out which of Mariana de la Encarnación's suppositions was true, but rather to explore the situation of 'imbalance' which her comment highlights. Whether through lack *or* excess, San José found itself displaced from the privileged site it originally occupied in the spiritual and institutional topography of the colony.

Sta. Teresa herself, writing a guide for male clergy who might be given the government of Discalced Carmelite convents on the orders of her confessor Jerónimo Gracián, emphasises the hierarchical relation between prelate and nuns in trenchantly conservative terms:

> *... no creo que hay cosa en el mundo que tanto dañe a un perlado como no ser temido y que piensen los subditos que pueden tratar con él como con igual, en especial para mujeres; que si una vez entienden que hay en el perlado tanta blandura, que ha de pasar por sus faltas y mudarse por no desconsolar, será bien dificultoso el governarlas*[441]

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[439] [The Discalced {Carmelites} consider ourselves utterly obedient and meek towards our prelates and we would not allow bad doctrines to influence this, whomsoever held them.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f30r Letter Mariana de la Encarnación, undated.

[440] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f30r Letter Mariana de la Encarnación, undated.

[441] [I doubt there is anything in the world can damage a prelate as much as not being feared and that his subjects be led to believe they may deal with him as with an equal, especially women, for if they understand even once that there is such weakness in the prelate, that he will ignore their faults and change his mind in order not to distress {them}, they will be difficult to govern] 'Visita de Descalzas' in *Obras Completas*, Efrén de la Madre de Dios & Otger Steggink Eds., (1967)647. It would not be unreasonable to suppose that the Archbishops of Mexico City would have been familiar with this text of Sta. Teresa's.

Nevertheless, Sta. Teresa is sophisticated in her appraisal of the politics governing such relations, and her rather abstract characterisation of authority above is contextualised by her recognition of the responsibilities the prelate owes the community of nuns. In order to maintain his authority, he must be rigorously impartial:

> *El Visitador no haga distinciones [...] que con ninguna hermana tenga más particularidad que con todas, para estar con ella a solas ni escrivirla, sino a todas mostrar el amor como verdadero padre*[442]

Sta. Teresa's rhetoric illustrates perfectly how the issue of authority is both abstract and spiritual as well as concrete and political. The conflict over the control of the female Carmelite convents, in all its complexity, was thus in a very real sense a direct legacy of Sta. Teresa herself.[443] In the San José *debâcle*, this uncertain history is used by both sides, who claim to know the truth about Sta. Teresa's real wishes for the order. The question of authority is also clearly a multi-dimensional problem, involving both the institutional benefits of exercising power over a convent as well as the personal issue of which priest each nun prefers to confess with. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that perhaps the strongest reason for Sta. Teresa's decision to subject her convents to the secular clergy at certain points in her reformation project was pragmatic rather than a matter of principle. She could not rely on the male Carmelite clergy to get her reforms through, but if she were under the authority of the secular clergy, her reforms would be endorsed by the Pope and, theoretically, impossible to challenge. Although Sta. Teresa did manage to obtain Papal support, she continued to meet opposition from within the Carmelite order which itself eventually fissured irrevocably.

An important source of information on this matter, and one which is simultaneously cited and censored by the New Spanish nuns, is Sta. Teresa's own book on the foundation of her convents, *Las fundaciones*, written at the behest of her confessors.[444] The book is marked by caution and by a desire not to implicate itself in direct criticism of the ecclesiastical authorities. Thus, it does not mention names, except

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[442] [The Visitor should not make distinctions {...} he should not be partial to any single sister over the others, either through being alone with her or writing to her, but should show his love towards all of them, as a true father] de la Madre de Dios & Steggink Eds. (1967)656.

[443] Cf. Otger Steggink, *La reforma del Carmelo Español: la Visita del General Rubeo y su encuentro con Sta. Teresa (1566-1567)* (Roma: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1965). For an account of the theological factors which influenced Sta. Teresa's relation with various prelates and how they transformed the gender hierarchy of such relations, see Steggink (1982).

to praise, and attempts to avoid comment on the political events in the midst of which the religious order found itself embroiled. It is clear, however, that the first Carmelite foundation was supported by the Bishop of Avila, Alvaro de Mendoza, and by the General of the Carmelites, Juan Bautista Rubeo de Ravena, and that this support was crucial for its success. It is also apparent that opinion was divided in the Carmelite order about the Discalced branch, which made matters very awkward for Sta. Teresa. The fact that there were no male Discalced Carmelites was something of a worry for the saint and, at least in this text, her efforts to appoint men of her liking and so extend her influence over the male Carmel is evident. She thus writes very openly about the convenience of a male foundation;

> *... porque tenía más deseo de que se hiciese el monasterio de los frailes que el de las monjas, por entender lo mucho que importaba, como después se ha visto*[445]

Unfortunately, it was clear that the institutional dependency of the male Discalced Carmel on the rest of the Carmelite order brought it close to ruin. With no constitutions of their own, each monastery governed itself as it saw fit and Sta. Teresa wrote eloquently on how such heterogeneity of practices led to disagreements and divisions which came close to extinguishing the reform before it had properly begun.[446] Eventually, constitutions were written specifically for the male Discalced branch, but the political climate did not favour reform and Sta. Teresa herself was effectively imprisoned by the Carmelite general chapter which, basing itself on the dictates of the Piacenza chapter of 1575, virtually declared war on the Discalced branch.

In Spain, the division within the Carmelite order was the reflection of a division within the Church itself between clergy who obeyed the King in his efforts to reform the Church, and those clergy who gave their allegiance to Rome and defended the universality of Trent. The conflict of interests is exemplified by the coincidence in 1567 of the departure from Rome of Juan Bautista Rubeo, the Carmelite general, to reform the order 'internally', with the granting to the Spanish Monarchy of the Bull *In Prioribus,*

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[444] Teresa de Jesús, *Libro de las fundaciones*, Victor García de la Concha Ed. (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1991).

[445] [because she preferred to found a monastery to a convent as she was aware of the importance of it, something which was to be confirmed later.] García de la Concha Ed. (1991)155. In fact, an entire chapter of the book is given over to the first male Carmelite foundation; Ch. XIII, *En que trata cómo se comenzó la primera casa de la regla primitiva y por quién, de los Descalzos Carmelitas, año de 1568.*

[446] García de la Concha Ed. (1991)199.

which gave power to the regular clergy to visit and reform Carmelite monasteries. This division between what was effectively a state Church and the representatives of the Universal Church from the Papal curia, led to absurd situations in which friars expelled by Rubeo were rehabilitated by the *Consejo Real* and given important posts within the Carmelite hierarchy.[447]

Immediately after Sta. Teresa's death, the situation became even more extreme. It is difficult to give a precise account of events within the Discalced order as much of the documentation surrounding what came to be known as the *Incidente de la Consulta* (a body created to centralise the government of the order) was destroyed.[448] What is clear is that the chief Discalced nuns, Ana de Jesús and Ana de San Bartolomé, took up adversarial positions on many issues. By far the most difficult and controversial of these was the question of the government of the female convents of the order. Ana de San Bartolomé was in favour of government by the male branch, considering it to be the best way of achieving spiritual correctness, while Ana de Jesús feared it would mean the loss of the traditional freedom enjoyed by the female branch. The quarrel split the Discalced nuns into two groups, Ana de Jesús, Jerónimo Gracián (who had pushed the Carmelite general chapter to accept the primitive constitutions for the reformed order) and San Juan de la Cruz on one side, and Ana de San Bartolomé and Nicolás Doria (Gracián's very conservative successor) on the other. Each faction claimed to be the legitimate spiritual heir of Sta. Teresa. Despite gaining Papal approval for their mission, the Ana de Jesús faction suffered persecution at the hands of the order itself. In 1592 Gracián was expelled, San Juan de la Cruz was temporarily sent to a far-away hermitage as a penance and Ana de Jesús herself was subjected to a rigorous *Visita* of her convent and eventually confined to her cell for three years. It is not improbable that in appointing her to organise the foundations in France and the Low Countries, the order was trying to put as much distance as possible between itself and this unruly nun.

It is thus very clear that, although the issue of the government of convents by secular or regular clergy had doctrinal aspects, the political and institutional stakes were equally evident and very high. Politics seems, in fact, to have been the dictating

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[447] Sta. Teresa's account of these political intrigues can be traced in her correspondence, though references are, unsurprisingly, guarded. In *Obras Completas*, de la Madre de Dios & Steggink Eds. (1967).

principle as far as achieving lasting reform was concerned. The final chapter of *Las fundaciones* illustrates this very dramatically in relation to the first Discalced convent founded by Sta. Teresa, that of San José de Avila. Originally, this convent was founded under the authority of the Bishop Alvaro de Mendoza, who was very sympathetic towards Sta. Teresa's aims and who, crucially, had a discretely liberal approach, allowing the saint to do very much as she pleased. When Mendoza left the bishopric, Sta. Teresa decided to switch the obedience of the convent to the male Carmel rather than to the unknown new bishop. Her anxiety centred transparently on guarding the autonomy of the convent. The change of allegiance was less about doctrinal issues in principle, and more about the practicalities of having the freedom to push reforms through and preserve the integrity of the rule.[450] Sta. Teresa expressed concern about being perceived to be behaving in contradictory ways, but the advice she received from her confessor confirmed the legitimacy of the pragmatic principles governing her decision:

> *Díjome que eso no hacía el caso, que para entonces debía ser menester aquello y para ahora estotro. Y hase visto bien claro será si verdad en muchas cosas, y que él veía estaría mejor aquel monasterio junto con estotros, que no solo.*[451]

Institutions

Given the clear importance of the political context in this issue of authority over convent communities, it seems crucial to consider the Mexican situation when this conflict recreated itself on New World soil. In the New World, the power struggle between the Monarchy and the Church and between the secular and the regular clergy came increasingly to be expressed in terms of the influence exercised in the colony respectively by peninsular Spaniards and Creoles.[452] In the last quarter of the sixteenth

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[448] For an introduction to the controversy see Concepción Torres, *Ana de Jesús, cartas (1590-1621): religiosidad y vida cotidiana en la clausura femenina del Siglo de Oro* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1995)9-42.

[449] García de la Concha Ed. (1991)295.

[450] García de la Concha Ed. (1991)295. For an illuminating article arguing for Sta. Teresa's possession of consummate political skills and her use of them to defend women's independent spirituality see Alison Weber, 'Sta. Teresa, Demonologist' in Cruz & Perry Eds., (1992)171-195.

[451] [he said to me that this did not matter. That then what was necessary was that and now it was this. And it has been clearly shown to be the truth, in many respects, and he thought this convent would be better off with the other {convents} than alone.] García de la Concha Ed. (1991)296.

[452] Cf. Brading (1991). Particularly Chapter 11, 'Tridentine Prelate' on archbishop Juan de Palafox y Mendoza.

century, division and animosity between *gachupines* and *criollos* within the Franciscan order, for example, was endemic and coincided with the petitions for the renewal of *encomiendas* being requested by disgruntled lay *criollos*. The problems within the Franciscan order gave rise to debates on the nature of the Indians and on the effects of the climate of the Americas, as well as punctilious legal arguments about the rights of these various groups in the colony.[453] The introduction of the *alternativa* in 1624, a system whereby a *criollo*, a *gachupín* and a *gachupín* who had professed in the Indies, were elected alternately to the leading offices of each Franciscan province, only partially resolved the problem.[454] The significance of the conflict between the secular and the regular clergy extended beyond these internal ecclesiastical differences however, and some historians have traced the birth of a politicised idea of 'nation', or at least of a *criollo* political identity to it.[455]

From the Inquisition documents, one could conjecture that there was a general move against the Carmelite order in the New Spanish church at the time. Clearly, an order that seemed to have the prerogatives of power and success and be growing in independence from the episcopate had to be kept in check. In part of the correspondence between the male and female branches of the order which is included in the Inquisition file, the chief of the male Carmelites in New Spain makes it apparent that the male branch of the order has been progressively barred from communicating with the female branch, as well as with women attached more tangentially to it, such as Carmelite *terceras* or *beatas*. The power of this prohibition is evident in that it was respected by the male Carmelites, who wrote refusing to take up the Mexican nuns' petition for their pastoral care. Clearly, this official injunction against any close relationship between male and female branches of a religious order sought to constrain the order's influence and public importance. It also seems to resonate with fear that the

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[453] The Franciscan reports on the spiritual capacities of Indian women which are discussed in Chapter 5. clearly form part of this wider discussion about the nature of indigenous Americans which was generated by the controversy.

[454] Brading (1991)293-313.

[455] See Cuevas's characterisation of the exclusion of Mexicans from high ecclesiastical office by the Crown as the final humiliation which drove the *criollos* to fight for independence. Cuevas (1921-6)4. Ch.3, 'El Episcopado y el Clero secular'. See also Lafaye (1974)I.III.19-24, Chapter entitled, 'Des Frères Ennemis: Espagnols et Créoles.' and II.II.78-108 'L'utopie Créole du <Printemps Indien>', particularly 'Le Charisme Créole.' For an interpretation which places the regular/secular conflict within a solidly European tradition of ecclesiastical dispute see Wright (1982)121-146. Wright points out that, "conflict between regulars and bishops [...] repeated, from the early seventeenth century, yet another aspect of the overseas export of problems internal to the Catholic church of the Counter-Reformation."(136).

autonomy of religious orders (male or female) would necessarily weaken secular and Papal control of them, and make any abuses of religious practice less visible.

From the documents in the Inquisition file, it is apparent that the Carmelite nuns had many connections to sources of power and influence in the colony which were quite outside the jurisdiction of the Church. Some of these consisted of a network of peninsular nobility, which linked aristocratic women inside the cloister with women in the court, including the Vicereign, to influential nuns in Spain and to women connected to the Vatican (Innocent X's niece). Some indication of the access to power possessed by this network is given in the affectionate and very personal letters written by the Condesa de Paredes (a professed Carmelite in Spain) on behalf of the Mexican nuns to both the King and to María Teresa of Austria (later queen of France).

The monarchical and courtly slant - both by definition peninsular - of these influences is evident. The nuns have at least one viceroy, Pedro de Galves, writing explicitly in support of them, as well as letters from the *Consejo de Indias* (another Crown institution) and even the King himself. It is possible, therefore, that a greater struggle, that between the Crown and the Church, is distinguishable behind the San José trial.[456] The fact that the rebellious Mexican nuns also curried influence in the Vatican complicates the issue however, for the Crown and the Papacy were not the best of allies. Their coming together like this in support of the nuns could be interpreted as signalling an even more radical state of affairs, where the New Spanish episcopate had grown so powerful that its ambitions were clearly to be independent of both Crown and Curia. The New Spanish Archbishops had indeed become used to wielding virtually unrestricted power and were clearly loath to let it go; especially in the form of the most valuable female convent in the colony.[457] Other of the documents in the Inquisition file encourage this interpretation; it transpires that Burqueiro was not the first Archbishop to have preached obedience to the unruly Carmelite nuns. Both Archbishops Palafox and Manzo before him had preached the same message to the convent, using the same biblical parable.[458]

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[456] Cf. Wright (1982)125.

[457] For classic accounts of the ecclesiastical skirmishes between the secular and the regular clergy in New Spain see Ricard, (1992) and Cuevas (1921-26). Also of interest, Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, Ed., *Iglesia y Religiosidad: Lecturas de Historia Mexicana, 5* (México: Colegio de México, 1992).

[458] The documents in the Inquisition file also reveal how San José was at the centre of various other more personal power struggles in the colony, including one by the Barrientos brothers to take over the most influential positions in the New Spanish Church. In exchange for their help, the rebellious nuns clearly bargained they would receive unconditional support for their cause. The Barrientos brothers use San José

In this period, the Inquisition itself became a powerful tool in the struggle between the secular and regular clergy, Archbishop Montúfar using the Holy Office in his drive to limit the power of the regular clergy. By the 1520's the regular clergy had been granted quasi-episcopal faculties in the New World, all of which were the consequence of the extraordinary position occupied by the missionary orders in the New World as the 'front line' of an evangelical project of epic proportions. Most of these powers were then taken away as a result of the implementation of the Council of Trent, but subsequently reaffirmed temporarily by the King and the Pope in 1567. The regulars themselves used the power afforded by the institution of the Inquisition and perhaps the most spectacular example was the trial in 1539 against Carlos Ometochzin, the Lord of Texcoco, organised by the Franciscan Archbishop Juan de Zumáraga. Ometochzin was a member of the Indian aristocracy and was also connected by family ties to the great *mestizo* clans being formed in New Spain. He was burnt at the stake for heresy by Zumáraga's specially created 'episcopal' Inquisition.[459] On coming to power, Montúfar made his desire to limit this kind of activity by the regulars very evident, and he himself used the Holy Office for this purpose, emphasising once again the power which could be wielded by using this institution. He immediately began an investigation into the writings of the most important regulars in the colony; Juan de Zumárraga himself and Maturino Gilberti. Montúfar's forceful reaction was almost certainly dictated by the competition for power which characterised relations between secular and regular clergy at this time. Zumárraga, for example, had proposed a reform programme for the entire clergy in the Indies which would have made even the regulars live within communities governed by a prelate.[460] It is thus not surprising that Montúfar took the first opportunity he had to attack Zumárraga, a man who threatened to 'reform' Montúfar's clerical lifestyle out of existence on the grounds that it lacked virtue. This struggle dragged on until 1574, when Philip II issued a decree which granted extensive power to the secular Archbishops. Actions like Montúfar's, however, had already confirmed the power of the seculars in the colony.

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as a centre for their lobbying, inviting the then Vicereign, the Duchess of Albuquerque, to it and plying her with gifts to gain her support and that of her husband. Eventually, one brother was granted the Rectorship of the university but the other ended up with a provincial bishopric rather than, as he had hoped and schemed for, the archbishopric of the capital.

[459] For an interpretation placing the 'Tragedy of Texcoco' in the context of Spanish expansionism, cultural and religious, see Bernand & Gruzinski (1993)116.

[460] See Marcel Bataillon, 'Zumárraga, reformador del clero' in Gonzalbo Aizpuru Ed., (1992)43-52 where he publishes a letter of Zumárraga's in which the Franciscan sets out his radical reform.

This instrumentalisation of the Inquisition in these power struggles is of great significance. Before the Holy Tribunal could intervene, the accused - in this case the regular clergy - had in effect to be arraigned on charges of heresy, or at least of blasphemy. This meant the New World Church had to accuse its own members of doctrinal error. The San José trial illustrates the radical upheavals this caused the ecclesiastical hierarchy; it is completely unlike all previous Inquisitorial investigations concerning women.[461] It is directed not against an individual but against an entire institution. Significantly, the only person to be interrogated at length on their spiritual beliefs and doctrinal correctness is the convent's confessor, Luis Becerra, not his spiritual charges. The implication of the Inquisition's interpretation of guilt and its judgements about the orthodoxy of the various witnesses, I will argue, reveals the important political and symbolic function of the New World nun and her convent.

Representations

The Carmelite nuns had been accustomed to representing their virtue and orthodoxy in the languages proper to hagiography and devotional and spiritual handbooks. The Inquisition demanded in effect that they use a completely different type of language. This chapter aims to analyse what transformations this caused in the classical genres and what more can be learnt about the New Spanish nuns and their convent in this 'new' representation of them. In an important sense, I will argue that what is on trial is not the convent itself, but hagiography as a proper vehicle for representing the orthodoxy of the convent's members adequately and convincingly.

An important premise I work with in this chapter is that the Inquisition, in its method of eliciting information and imposing writing on its witnesses, dramatises the narrative crises and difficulties I diagnosed classical hagiography as suffering from in earlier chapters. I have already shown how the convent chronicle, as collection of hagiographies, encountered difficulty in representing a harmonious picture of the community of nuns. The chronicle seems to be exclusively designed for the

[461] The only nuns to be tried in the Montúfar Inquisition came before the tribunal in 1560. Both women belonged to the same influential family and courtly elite circles, circles which eventually managed to extricate the women from Montúfar's hands. Francisca de la Anunciación and Elena de la Cruz were professed nuns in the convent of La Encarnación. They were accused of holding Erasmian ideas, and it is clear that at least Elena de la Cruz was well read in such dangerous authors as Fray Luis de Granada. In

representation of a catalogue of virtuous individuals, not of a virtuous community. The cracks in hagiography are already evident. In the Carmelite hagiographies which make up the chronicle of San José, 'Carmelite' theoretically signifies 'Perfection' and *vice versa*. In order to mark-out the individual however, hagiography needs to set up comparisons which necessarily pit the saintly subject against the more earth-bound inhabitants of the convent, and thus result in a representation of the community as disunited. The fact that all the nuns in San José are Carmelite and thus implicitly 'perfect' becomes problematic: hagiography's convenient tautology between religious affiliation and religious perfection is unveiled as a rhetorical slight-of-hand which disguises a host of divisions within the convent.

I contend that this unveiling is what happens rather more crudely and dramatically in the Inquisition writings: that the rhetorical paradox at the heart of the genre of hagiography is foregrounded by the Inquisition trial which required that perfection be explained in different terms, using a different language. What this chapter will argue is that the resulting solutions to the paradox, and to the challenge of defining perfection, which are evident in the various testimonies and documents are all indebted to the Inquisition's particular epistemological approach. I define this approach as practical, specific and detailed, as opposed to the theoretical, universal and abstract epistemology deployed by hagiography. The approach of the Inquisition produced a certain kind of narrative which, necessarily and inescapably, is marked by its New World provenance. It thus allows us to see a sphere of convent life less accessible in a classical hagiographic representation of it.

It is crucial to mention that the main factor which marks these writings as from the New World is the same that interrupted the classic hagiographic narrative: issues of race and culture. It is already evident that the convent is a site of conflict, both notionally and in reality. Sta. Teresa herself had divided her convent up through her insistence on reform and in this she fulfilled her role as hagiographic *reformadora* perfectly. She also initiated the trope of the convent as a place of dissent. As I have illustrated, this dissent is expressed principally as a conflict between a saintly nun and her more sinful sisters, but the New World versions construct these oppositions in complex ways, which relate not only to provenance but also to class. When such

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this respect, she was very much like the Old World *ilusas*. However, her family connections were able to hire a lawyer to defend her and eventually ensured her absolution.

oppositions are explored in the proceedings of the Inquisition trial, the cloister and its desire to represent only the transcendental, I will argue, must necessarily be abandoned and the (new) world, with its specific racial, cultural and class histories, entered into. The accounts in the Inquisition file are thus extraordinary testaments to the lived experience of women in the New Spanish cloister.

One interesting facet of the transmission, and in this case conflict, of culture is evident in Andrea de San Francisco's approach to reform. The influence of the aristocracy, the role of family power and of worldliness *per se*, were viewed by Sta. Teresa as manifestations of wealth and of possession; neither of which had a place inside the Discalced cloister. In her searing criticism of the activities of the *gachupina* nuns in the convent, Andrea de San Francisco alludes precisely to this tradition, representing the mundanity of these women as deflecting the reformed order away from its origins and into relaxed ways. Conveniently for Andrea, she can of course also make use of the positive connotations of the New World on this occasion - the land of evangelical enterprise, she argues, is certainly not the place to recreate the sins of the Old World but one in which to extend the reformed 'new' order. Thus, Andrea's comments throughout the trial can be linked very closely to principles of Teresian reform, but this reform should be understood to include even the dissent implicit in the concept. The New World Carmelites inherit a fractured tradition and reproduce it as fractured, but the terms of fissure are different and specific to New Spain.

In this context, it must be emphasised that already by the mid seventeenth century the *criollos* of New Spain clearly felt they belonged to a country and culture that was in many respects completely different to the mother country, but in as many others again, a reconstitution of it. Anthony Pagden alludes to this pull of the Old world in the New in his reference to the construction of a *querelle des anciens et modernes* in the Indies, where the modernity of the *Gachupines*, lies in their not being connected directly to the land, but instead involved in commerce.[462] The recreation of archaic social structures in the New World society would clearly have influenced all sorts of social and political relations. The fortunes of the concept of *pureza de sangre* in the Indies is a case in point. The Inquisition sources examined point to a much broader understanding of the notion, one which embraced the idea of honour almost on feudal terms, and

[462] Anthony Padgen, 'The Creation of Identity in Colonial Spanish America: c1520-1830c' in Pagden (1984)51-93.

most certainly tied it in to a complex system of social class.[463] Purity and nobility of blood had definitely become mixed and necessarily very resonant concepts at the time in the hybrid society of the Indies. The New World saint was certainly not exempt from these contradictions. As has been illustrated earlier in the thesis, hagiography always struggled to account for the virtue of its protagonists through a narrative structure that conceded duality: one was both able to inherit and to accede to virtue. Clearly, the virtue of protagonists on the Inquisitorial stage was equally and arguably more transparently subject to such vicissitudes.

The great value of Inquisition sources comes, of course, precisely from this documenting of the 'underside' of the cultural project in the Americas; the deviation from the model, the failure of transmission. Nevertheless, it is crucial to keep in mind how circumscribed the Inquisition's activities in the cultural field of the colonies were. In 1571 in Mexico, a decree was passed removing Indians from the jurisdiction of the Inquisition. The most important fact about the Inquisition in the New World is thus that its social reach and influence was predominantly restricted to policing the faith of a limited, if heterogeneous, ethnic and cultural group: the non-Indians in the colony.

This meant that the types of cases that came to trial in the New Spanish Inquisition were substantially different to the Old World ones.[464] Interestingly, even heresy seems to be different in America. Basically, there were no great heretics in the New World, the vast majority of Inquisition cases concerned the odd Protestant, usually a northern European sailor or pirate blown off-course. According to Alberro;

> *C'est une avalanche de petits déviants dont les actes ou les propos remettent en cause ou ignorent simplement la loi de l'Église en matière de bonnes moeurs; ceux-là s'épanouissent dans une floraison toute tropicale, se nourrissant profusément des relations de domination spécifiques de la situation coloniale, de l'émigration masculine et de la mobilité spatiale et sociale à l'ombre d'un encadrement institutionnel et idéologique précaire*[465]

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[463] It could be argued that *pureza de sangre* in the New World is completely caught up in an aristocratic problematic where there is truly only ever one pure blood; that of the noble. The problem then becomes how to define the noble in the vertiginous social universe of the Indies. Cf. Zúñiga (1995)240. On the concept of honour in the period, see José Antonio Maravall, *Poder, honor y elites en el siglo XVII* (México: Siglo XXI, 1979).

[464] Cf. Alberro (1988) Introduction.

[465] Alberro (1988)86. Despite her careful analysis of cases, Alberro indulges in this kind of metaphor throughout her work. I would wish to draw away from this kind of rhetoric which reproduces *topoi* of the New World as eternally fertile etc. and tends to exoticize both the deviant and marginal and, by extension, the metaphorical home 'America' provided them. For a more rhetorically sober account of the kind of Inquisition cases typical of the New World and what they reveal about the colonial universe, see Bernand & Gruzinski (1993)307; *un extraordinaire entrelacs de croyances que les autorités de la Nouvelle-Espagne ne se pré occupent guère d'extirper, à l fois parce qu'elles savent l'entreprise irréalisable et parce que ce tourbillon d'images, d'espoirs et de rites ne se métamorphose ni en un mouvement hérétique ni en une*

She goes on to point out that it is only when the heretic seems to be about to enter a community or become a social force that the Inquisition takes any real interest in him or her. The implications of this comment for events in San José are evident. On this occasion, a very Old World situation presents itself, accompanied by the spectre of a particularly dangerous feminine spirituality and its potential spread to an entire community of women of the New Spanish élite.

The care with which heresy must be interpreted in the context of the events connected to San José is illustrated very clearly in the documents concerning the role of the confessor in the convent. That the role of confessors was of critical importance is self-evident in this case, where the nuns end up before the Inquisition precisely for what are considered to be heretical views connected to the appointment of the latter. This calls for a reassessment of the significance of the confessor within the cloister. The confessor endorsed the authority of his chief, either the bishop or the leader of the male Carmel, by 'directing' the nuns. He also 'penetrated' the cloister and could report back. There was no other outside agency which could do this. None of this, however, could be taken to mean that a preference for confessing with certain individuals was heretical. Nevertheless, the nuns of San José had already appeared before the Inquisition twenty seven years earlier, in a scandal involving a confessor.[466] On this occasion, the heresy was much more traditionally expressed in terms of aberrant sexuality, the confessor standing accused of soliciting his confessants, a crime prosecuted with extraordinary frequency by the New Spanish Inquisition.[467]

The extent of Fray Pedro de Miranda's sexual misbehaviour seems to have been confined to using some particularly hackneyed affectionate terms towards Ana de San Francisco; *bonilla, volcán de hielo* (pretty one, ice-volcano), and to getting so close

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protestation sociale. An attempt to define a New World psychology, using Inquisition cases as 'ethno texts', can be found in Bartolomé Escandell Bonet, 'Una lectura psico-social de los papeles del Sto. Oficio: Inquisición y sociedad Peruanas en el siglo XVI' in *La Inquisición Española: nueva visión, nuevos horizontes*, Joaquín Pérez Villanueva Ed. (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1980)437-467. For an analysis of Inquisition trials involving heretical women which interprets the phemenon as a direct cultural imposition of Spanish norms, see Méndez (1989). The cases she discusses are all late eighteenth century.

[466] AGN Inq. Vol. 384 Exp. 2 ff244-270. *Causa criminal contra el presbítero Fray Pedro de Miranda, Capellán del convento de San Joseph de Carmelitas Descalzas, por solicitante 1637.*

[467] On soliciting friars in America see Alberro (1988) and Greenleaf (1969). On this phenomenon in the Old World, see also Stephen Haliczer, *Inquisition and Society in the Kingdom of Valencia 1478 - 1834* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) for the Church's prosecution of soliciting priests in Spain. Most of these men were Franciscan friars and there was certainly a widely held belief that the Mendicant

to her in the confessional she could feel the sweat from his face.[468] Another nun, Teresa de Jesús suffered similar harassment, Miranda telling her he could not live without her.[469]

Most of the proceedings in the case, however, concentrate not on Miranda's assault on his own and the nuns' vow of chastity, but on his role in *dividing* the community. The nuns who appear as witnesses are of the opinion that he split the convent into factions. One of the founding mothers mentions his favouritism, which allegedly lead him to give more than one host to particular nuns during the sacrament of communion.[470] This type of criticism, given the suspicion with which spiritual events connected to the sacrament were viewed by the Church at the time, and the mistrust surrounding its relation to feminine piety, is extremely strong.

As soon as the claim that Miranda was responsible for dividing the convent is taken into account, it becomes clear that it was possible to understand divisions in a cloister involving a confessor in a manner very different to that presented in the second Inquisition trial involving San José. Not all divisions in the convent are necessarily caused by the holding of heretical ideas. The case of Miranda would lead one to speculate that at least some divisions caused by a confessor within the community could be interpreted by the Inquisition as falling into the category of soliciting, not of doctrinal error.

In this way, Miranda's tempting Ana de San Francisco with the possibility that she might become a reformer of the convent was viewed as part and parcel of his soliciting her. And this soliciting is damned by the nun herself in a revealing metaphor which shows the measure of authority usually accorded a confessor over the spiritual education of his charges:

> *... las primeras piedras que puso en el edificio de mi alma fueron persuadirme que en este convento no había religiosa con obediencia, y que yo había venido a enseñar estas virtudes ..*[471]

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orders' relation to their female confessants was nearly always a dubious one. Hence perhaps Juan Luis Vives's counsel that they not be appointed as confessors to widows.

[468] AGN Inq. Vol. 384 Exp. 2 f260r.

[469] AGN Inq. Vol. 384 Exp. 2 unfoliated.

[470] AGN Inq. Vol. 384 Exp. 2 f244v.

[471] AGN Inq. Vol. 384 Exp. 2 f260v [The foundation stones he placed in my soul's building were to persuade me that there was not a single obedient nun in this convent and that I had been sent to teach these virtues]. Cf. also Miranda's own definition of his role where he sees himself as an Indian wet-nurse: *Hablando de los confesores de las religiosas, dijo que no eran que hortelanos y chichiguos [sic] y que así como éstas comentaban. Así [...] pero que si a la criatura no le echaba leche no era por culpa de la chichigua sino por culpa de la criatura, y que así le había sucedido a él en Sta. Teresa con algunas que*

Similarly, Miranda's involvement in the rigging of convent elections and the absolute cynicism he showed in relation to the unity of San José was also apparently accounted for by the idea of soliciting.[472]

Clearly, though heresy may be defined in strictly doctrinal terms, confining the study of its manifestations to these strict terms limits interpretation. The Inquisition's role as a keeper of mores and enforcer of social cohesion is a widely used concept, and in its prosecution of heresy, at least in this example, it is apparent it was concerned with matters much more diffuse than purely issues of doctrine. What is also eminently clear is that the divisions internal to San José were already sufficiently marked in this period to mean that the convent as an institution was obliged to seek the help of the Inquisition. Some thirty years later, the phenomenon would be even less contained, and those accused of heresy would be the nuns themselves. The more minor episode, however, highlights the crucial role of the confessor in the convent community, and also illustrates the elasticity of the concept of the unorthodox for the New Spanish Inquisition.

New World Subjectivities

Earlier in Chapter 4., in the examination of travel writing in the chronicles, I discussed the importance of forensic rhetoric in the construction of a new kind of subject who could authorise the narratives being produced in and about the Americas. Elsewhere, I also examined intimate confessional letters and their reworking into hagiography for public consumption. In the Inquisition source, the conjunction of forensic rhetoric with intimacy is evident. One of the aims of this chapter will be to show that the nuns, when using this rhetoric of eye-witness experience for matters connected to the privacy of the confessional, produce accounts of religious practice which are strongly marked by their own subjectivities and are thus full of ambiguity. These are not

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había enseñado Sta. Doctrina y desterrado otras muy pernicios as, y ellas no se hablan ni querido aprovechar de ella ... AGN Inq. Vol. 384 Exp. 2 f258v [Speaking of confessors and nuns, he said the former were nothing but gardeners and Indian wet nurses and the nuns themselves said this. And so if the children did not take the milk, it was not the fault of the wet nurse but of the child, and this had happened to him in Sta. Teresa with some (nuns) to whom he had taught good doctrine and from whom he had tried to banish bad doctrines, but they had not wanted to take advantage of his teaching.].

[472] AGN Inq. Vol. 384 Exp. 2 f261r.

the personal testimonies of hagiography, which theoretically record only the universal wish for salvation held by saintly individuals.

A good way of testing this hypothesis is to examine the testimonies in the Inquisition file relating to Andrea de San Francisco which form what I will call 'anti-hagiographies'. Given that the Inquisition is excellent at prosecuting *ilusas*, this entire trial is something of a disappointment, for none of the anti-hagiographies come near to representing Andrea as a serious threat to Catholic faith and dogma. Nothing spectacular happens in this trial. The nuns do not give the Inquisition what it wants. Even though they use the model of *reformadora* to some extent, Andrea never appears as the mystic *ilusa* Sta. Teresa would probably have seemed, had she herself been tried, or as the various *beatas* prosecuted by the New Spanish Tribunal appeared. The San José trial remains firmly on the ground of political and institutional struggle, of family and nobiliary politics and of cultural differences; resolutely things of this (New) World and not the next.[473]

My reading of the San José trial in this chapter attempts to use the Inquisition source in order to reach an understanding of subjectivity in historical context and so illuminate the cultural reality of the inhabitants of the New Spanish colonial convent. While acknowledging the heavily controlled nature of Inquisition source material, I hope to show how a careful use of it can provide more than a catalogue of archetypes and *topoi* and how a study which introduces a comparison between the New World and Old World versions of these patterns (be they literary genres or social structures) can contribute to the pinpointing of what exactly overflowed or did not fit the requisite pattern; where exactly difference lay, and thus what constituted the novelty of the New World and what the originality of the Old.[474]

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[473] For a good review of what constitutes a 'classic' Inquisition case against spiritual women (thus illustrating how far the San José trial is from this model) see Mary Elizabeth Perry, '*Beatas* and the Inquisition in Early Modern Seville' in *Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe*, Stephen Haliczer Ed. (London: Croom & Helm, 1987)147-168. Cf. for the Post-Tridentine Inquisition, Haliczer (1990)295-329.

[474] Cf. Julio Caro Baroja, *Vidas mágicas e Inquisición* 2 vols (Madrid: Istmo, 1992)1.68 on the necessity of studying Inquisition material in this way, acknowledging the agency and presence of the human individual in history; *No de otra manera actúan los planes o esquemas biológicos. Un margen de indeterminación no invalida la existencia real de tales planes o esquemas ni la necesidad de estudiar los arquetipos. Lo que no cabe es caer en dogmas 'literarios' o 'socializantes', en convertir toda la materia a investigar en puro asunto de fuentes e influencias literarias, escritas o transmitidas oralmente o en aplicación de un método formalmente dado.* [Biological patterns or plans do not behave in any other way. A margin of indeterminacy does not invalidate the real existence of such patterns or plans, nor the necessity of studying archetypes. What is not permissible, however, is the falling into 'literary' or 'social' dogmas, the conversion of all material under study into a matter of sources and literary influences, written or oral, or the application of a formulaic methodology.].

Documents Relating to Requests for Confessors: the Nuns and the Archbishop

There are three documents which appear in the Inquisition file concerning the request by dying nuns in San José for Carmelite confessors. Two are letters addressed to the Archbishop by, respectively, the founding mother, Mariana de la Encarnación, and by Margarita de San Bernardo. The third document is a declaration to the Tribunal by María de San Leocadia about the making of these kinds of requests. The dramatic nature of this sort of petition should be kept in mind. The nuns who are on their death beds, preparing to make a general confession which would review their whole lives, assert their need for a specific kind of spiritual comfort. Their souls are about to enter purgatory and the unstated, but clearly present implication is that their salvation depends on their request being granted.[475]

The letter written by the founding mother, Mariana de la Encarnación, is remarkable for the measured and diplomatic way in which it introduces the extreme situation from which it is born. The letter appeals to the Archbishop's reason and its tone is conciliatory. Despite its attempts to find grounds for consensus, the letter does not concede to any of the major criticisms that have been levelled at the convent. The founding mother's main argument and defence is to insist that her refusal to placate the Archbishop is not based on theological, but on practical considerations which concern the quality of the confessor:

> *le pedía licencia para que me confesase con un religioso de mi sagrada religión por haberme desahuciado los médicos y cirujanos que me curan. Iba el alma con escrúpulos y dudas en materias de mi religión y para según la necesidad de mi conciencia en este artículo comunicarle estas cosas, porque como lo practican lo enseñan con mayor magisterio y eficacia, y el alma que iba con más consuelo y satisfacción.*[476]

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[475] One would expect the Archbishop to be particularly touched by this, in effect, *memento mori*. Cf. Delumeau (1983)363; *Ainsi, même pour les saints, la mort est parfois difficile et, à l'époque que nous étudions, la peur de l'au-delà fut d'abord et surtout le tragique privilège d'une élite chrétienne.*

[476] [I asked him for permission to confess with a priest of my own order as the doctors had declared that I was dying and my soul was troubled with doubts and hesitations concerning matters related to the order and my conscience felt the need for this matter to be communicated {to a Carmelite} because as they practice it, they teach it with more mastery and efficiency and the soul thus proceeds with more comfort and satisfaction] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f5r Letter Mariana de la Encarnación, undated.

Her struggle is about practising the virtues of patience, diligence and obedience. Mariana supports her statements by an extraordinary personal commentary in which she describes how near to death she is and asserts her long years of experience as a prioress. Movingly, she mentions her own humanity and failings, making clear that despite all her experience she has not reached perfection and is still in need of the Carmelite rule, which she lovingly insists is the only path to salvation:

> *... procuramos no la larga ni soltura, sino la estrechura y el rigor que se practica en toda nuestra religión sagrada, de que hago a Dios testigo, y por el trance en que estoy y no sólo lo puedo afirmar de mí, sino que lo afirmo por las demás. Porque me consta como prelada que he sido algunos años, pero en todo me sujeto a la corrección de Nuestra Sta. Madre Iglesia, pesándome de no haberme aprovechado de esta cosecha, teniendo la paciencia resignación y humildad que Dios quiere y pide de este Sto. Hábito, que confieso que con mi falta de mortificación lo he sentido y siento mucho, y respirando la naturaleza con sus resabios más de lo justo. Mas en nada estoy rebelde, sino que me quiero sujetar y sujeto a Dios Nuestro Sr., a sus leyes y ministros, como hija de la Iglesia.*[477]

Margarita de San Bernardo strikes the same personal tone and again links it to the practice of religion rather than to any theological dispute. She also is careful not to imply that she thinks less of other religious orders or considers them unqualified to absolve her. It is simply that, in her opinion, they cannot have the knowledge that comes with practice and which a Carmelite must, by the nature of things, possess.[478] A similarly personal justification of the need for Carmelite confessors is to be found in the letter from María de San Leocadia, who resorts to the traditional metaphor of family love and unity. The nuns, she says, are daughters of St. Elias and as such they should be tended to by his sons.[479]

By anchoring their requests in a rhetoric of personal need and the fulfilment of a rigorous religious practice, these nuns clearly hoped to be able to foil any accusations of heterodoxy. This does not mean Mariana de la Encarnación's letter is not also strongly positive in its assertion of her need for a Carmelite confessor. The founding

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[477] [We want not freedom nor easiness but the strictness and rigour which is practised throughout our sacred order and I make God my witness in this, in the death-bed I find myself in, and I can not only affirm it personally but for the others, as I have been their prioress for a number of years - though in everything I subject myself to the correction of our Holy Mother the Church. I am weighed down by not having profited from this harvest by having the requisite resignation and humility that God wants and asks of this Holy Habit which I profess, and also with my lack of mortification I have felt {this} and feel {it} very much, and feeling the breath of Nature and her sap in me, more strongly than what is correct. But in none of this am I rebellious, rather I want to subject myself and I do subject myself as a daughter of the Church to God Our Father and His laws and His ministers.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f9r Letter Mariana de la Encarnación, undated.

[478] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f46r Letter Margarita de San Bernardo, 24th January 1661.

mother does not rest her defence on the notion that it 'would do no harm' for the nuns of San José to confess with Carmelites. She argues instead that it is their right, a right founded in history and supported by tradition. The Carmelites, she states, have always desired to be ruled by the male branch of the order and, she claims, God himself intervened to tell Sta. Teresa that she should submit the convents in Avila to the rule of the male Carmelites as soon as was possible.[480] Mariana claims that she has heard that choosing a confessor is a free choice. At this point in a person's life, the founding mother argues, the selection of a confessor should be left to individual conscience, rather than dictated by religious hierarchy.[481] She is, however, quick to defend herself against any charges of theological error which the claim might suggest, by saying that there is no doubt in her mind that any priest, of any order, is able to absolve her sins:

> *... sin intención ninguna de errar ni de disgustar a mi prelado, sino sólo de lo dicho, ni porque dude ni haya dudado jamás, ni oído a persona alguna que dude de que absuelve de los pecados todos los sacerdotes legítimamente ordenados y examinados por el superior,*[482]

it is merely that a fellow Carmelite would be more suitable. As with all witnesses before the Inquisition, this woman is eager to disguise her personal preference as obedience - either to tradition, to a founding figure or, in the last instance, to God himself.

It is illuminating in the context of these requests to look at the letters addressed by the Archbishop to various of the Prioresses of San José. Although they are not the actual replies to the letters addressed to him above, the documents in the Inquisition file clearly form part of a heated correspondence between the Archbishop and the Carmelites concerning this issue of confessors. It is also clear that, nominally at least, it is this correspondence which ultimately results in the arraignment of the convent before the Inquisition.

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[479] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f44r Letter María de San Leocadia, undated.

[480] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f5v Letter Mariana de la Encarnación, undated. This divine injunction is, of course, the ultimate proof of Truth. Mariana de la Encarnación is probably referring to the last chapter of *Las fundaciones* where Sta. Teresa writes about how a divine sign told her to change the obedience given by the convent in Avila from the Archbishop to the male Carmel.

[481] *... y también por haber entendido que es acto libre el de elejir confesor, especialmente en este trance* [and because I have heard it said that choosing a confessor is a free act, especially in this circumstance] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f5r Letter Mariana de la Encarnación, undated.

[482] [Without the least intent to commit an error or displease my prelate, but concerning what I have heard, it is not that I doubt or have ever doubted or heard that someone doubts that all legitimately ordained priests, tested by their superior, may absolve sins] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f5r Letter Mariana de la Encarnación, undated.

One letter from the Archbishop, dated 13 January 1659, is particularly interesting if read together with the letter from Mariana de la Encarnación, discussed above. In part, this is because Burqueiro writes with great care and considerable attention to the implications of what he is saying. He presents the relationship between himself and the convent of San José in a classically hagiographic way. In this kind of discourse, the institutional and political factors influencing the Archbishop's relationship to the Carmelite convent are silenced in favour of the pastoral and affective rights and duties which were ordinarily held to exist between an archbishop and his flock. The nuns are the apple of the prelate's eye, and he emphasises that San José is especially dear to him:

> *... son de ellos las niñas de sus ojos [...] y aunque a todos los conventos he deseado este bien con mayor especialidad a esta santa casa ...* [483]

In this respect, his reply constitutes a rhetorical strategy parallel to the assertion of personal need and of the value of practice over theory used by the nuns in their letters. It serves to disconnect the situation from the very obvious political and institutional issues at stake in the affair, and allows the author to occupy the moral highground.

The remainder of the letter is designed to show how Burqueiro fulfils both his professional duties, by providing suitable confessors for the nuns, and his paternal obligations by ensuring that the confessors are qualified and that the nuns are happy with them. Given that the entire conflict between the Archbishop and San José centres on the 'quality' of confessors (in the sense both of their religious affiliation and their ability) it is important to note that Burqueiro deliberately ignores the question of religious affiliation in his defence and praise of the men he appoints. In an accomplished justification of his actions and motives, he underlines the universal respect accorded throughout the kingdom to the principal confessor he names, Jacinto de la Serna. He goes on to display his own reasonableness by making it apparent that he asked the nuns if they wished to confess with someone else, and then describes how, having been given a name, he promptly allowed them to confess with the priest they had requested, one Mercado:

> *Dr. Don Jacinto de la Sema, cuyas letras, virtud y prudencia hasta hoy no se atrevió a culpar en este reino la mayor malevolencia, y por si alguna religiosa*

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[483] [They are the apple of the secular clergy's eye ... and though I have felt this for all the convents, I have felt it especially for this Holy house.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f42r.

quisiese consolarse con otro sacerdote pregunté a Vuestra Reverencia cuál sería de su mayor consuelo en Dios, habiéndome respondido el Licenciado Mercado, le dí plena facultad para que acudiese a este ministerio ...[485]

The letter ends on an almost hyperbolic note of generosity and concern. Burqueiro knows that many of the nuns are accustomed to confessing with a priest named Téllez, who has had to stop going to the convent due to illness, and has in fact moved away from the city. Nevertheless, the Archbishop summons Téllez, who despite his poor health obeys the appeal and sets off on the long journey to the convent:

... y porque entendí que algunas religiosas le tendrían en desahogar sus corazones con quien tantos años las había administrado en viendo a decir el mismo Téllez que, aunque fué atropellado con su salud, sin dilatación viniese a esta ciudad y reconciliase a todas las que quisieren hacerlo, que al punto se puso en camino[486]

In a letter written two years earlier however, the institutional and political struggles for power which lie at the centre of the Inquisition case are much more apparent. In reply to a deathbed petition from María del SS. Sacramento for a Carmelite confessor, Burqueiro mounts a spirited defence of the Franciscans and Jesuits he proposes. He claims that one of them resembles in virtue Pedro de Alcántara, the saint so admired by Sta. Teresa, while the other's learning and piety are acknowledged throughout the kingdom.[487] However, Burqueiro then goes on to say that religious affiliation should ultimately count for nothing in these cases. A virtuous nun's greatest comfort should be her correct and pious fulfilment of her vows, not her confessor's religious order:

... debiendo ser su mayor consuelo su vida tan llena de ajustamento y paciencia.[488]

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[485] [Dr Dn. Jacinto de la Serna, whose learning, virtue and prudence not even the worst malevolence in this kingdom has dared to impugn. And if any nun wishes to confess with another priest, I asked your Reverence which one would be the best Holy comfort, and you having suggested the *licenciado* Mercado, I fully authorized him to carry out this function.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp 1 f42r.

[486] [And because I understood that some nuns would want to open their hearts to the person who had looked after them for so many years, namely Téllez, who, though sick, I ordered he should come without delay to the city and confess all those nuns who wished to do so, and he set off immediately] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f42r.

[487] Letter of 1 November 1657 addressed to María del SS. Sacramento AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f43v. The Franciscan is Juan de San Joseph, the Jesuit Barrera.

[488] [Her greatest comfort should be her well regulated and patient life] letter of 1st November 1657 addressed to María del SS. Sacramento AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f43v.

Any other considerations are judged by the Archbishop as instances of human weakness which should be excised from the perfect convent:

> *el [ ] retiro de humanas comunicaciones peste de lo religioso son los [ ] que se conserva el mayor agrado de Dios en sus hijos [ ], no humanas filatelias, no afecta [sic] las apariencias de virtud, no solicitud de la división que tanto aborreció la Santa Madre, y mandó se cortase ese cáncer.*[489]

In this letter, Burqueiro is caught between wishing to affirm the particular saintliness of other orders and the fact that indulging in such a defence concedes difference and implies criticism - an argument which is precisely the one used by the nuns themselves to justify their own claims.

Throughout both letters however, it is the hagiographic genre which provides the Archbishop with the strongest rhetorical position from which to assert his opinion. It puts him in a place of absolute authority, leaving the nuns who want Carmelite confessors looking weak and impious, unable to behave in a spiritually correct fashion. The rhetoric appropriate to the Archbishop is one which allows him to accuse the nuns of worldliness (human attachments and family factions - both of which are *de facto* political alliances in this context) and the problem for the nuns is to find a way to argue their side in spiritually positive terms. This, at least rhetorically, proves to be a complicated task.

Letters from the *Hijas de la Orden* to the King

The Inquisition file contains two letters from the *Hijas de la Orden* to the King, one of 1657, which predates the scandal with the Archbishop by four years and another written during the Inquisition process itself in 1661.[490] These letters, along with the documents discussed above, form the only source of information on what was happening in San José which was not produced directly for the Inquisition. As such, it

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[489] [Abstraction from human communication, that plague of religion { } is where God's pleasure in his children is to be found { } not in human attachments, not in love for the semblance of virtue, not in encouragement of the disunion so hated by the Holy Mother who ordered that such a cancer be excised] letter of 1 November 1657 addressed to María del SS. Sacramento AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f43v.

[490] The terminology of calling one group of nuns *Hijas de la Orden* and the other *Clérigas Monigotas* is, Andrea de San Francisco reports, first employed by the nuns supporting the Carmelite authorities who give themselves a dignified name (*Hijas de la Orden*) and the others a derogatory one (*clérigas monigotas*): *llamándose ellas mismas unas las Hijas de la Orden y a las otras las Clérigas Monigotas y otros nombres.* [calling themselves the daughters of the order and the others the clerical humbugs] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f83r Andrea de San Francisco 4 February 1661.

seems fitting to discuss them together and then go on to look at the sources produced exclusively during the Inquisition process. Grouping the sources in this sequence allows the examination of the hypothesis that the narrative imperatives and truth asked for by the various audiences addressed, lead to markedly different representations of the events in San José.

Significantly, in neither of the letters do the nuns make use of the commonplaces of hagiographic literature. They argue from a rhetorical position best described as pragmatic, presenting themselves alternately as the King's daughters and then as representatives of the Church's evangelical project in the Indies. They certainly allude to their spiritual perfection unashamedly, but write of it in practical terms, as an issue pertaining as much to the good government of the convent as to religious transcendence.

In the first of these letters the fact that the convent is in the Indies is central to the argument. In the opinion of the authors, it is only because the nuns are under the education and care of the Carmelite fathers that such an irregular and precarious situation can be stabilised. This is a very polished and elegant argument, immediately striking the tone of impartiality, careful not to accuse the secular clergy of faults and to ascribe the problems the convent is encountering to the context in which it finds itself. The conclusion of the letter is predictable: it is simply not possible for members of the secular clergy to govern New Spanish Carmelites and guide them to perfection and t is interesting here to note their use of the family as metaphor as well as the notion of property to secure their argument by claiming, in more senses than one, that Carmelites 'belong' together:

> *Este convento se fundó en esta ciudad el año de 1616 y por no hallarse en estas provincias religiosas carmelitas criadas en el espíritu de Nuestra Gloriosa Madre Sta. Teresa y las ocurrencias del tiempo no permitiesen por entonces que las fundadoras (que fueron dos religiosas del convento Real de Jesús María, que guardaban la regla de San Francisco) diesen la obediencia a los prelados de Nuestra Religión, sino a los ordinarios, los arzobispos y vicarios en la sede vacantis han gobernado hasta el año de 1656. A ayudarnos a acudir con nuestras obligaciones (que son de vida perfecta), siempre han precedido con mucha atención y amor, con veneración a la comunidad y a la observancia de nuestras leyes, si bien como no las profesan no las entienden para lo práctico, ni les han dado ni podido dar nunca el punto que para su puntual guarda se requiere, con que hemos reconocido que no sólo está a riesgo de peligrar sino que en ocasiones peligra su cumplimiento. Y así que es verdad que los prelados se han [ ] de nuestros religiosos carmelitas descalzos (que en estas partes florecen en toda perfección y loable ejemplo) para que de cuando en cuando que ha sido una vez [ ] nos confiesen [ ] nuestros, platiquen y prediquen, con que hemos tenido algún consuelo pero [ ] no el necesario por que han asistido como*

huéspedes, aconsejando con recato y temor como en casa extraña, y no disponiendo con propiedad. Con lo cual hemos servido en gran confusión, tormento y desconsuelo porque las que venimos a buscar la perfección que se profesa en la descalcez del Carmen, en lo continuo ejercicio es oración y mortificación con sumo retiro y abstracción de todo lo criado, no hallamos ni prelados que nos ayuden ni entiendan los menudos puntos y [ ] nuestras observancias, antes muchas veces las tienen por cosas ridículas.[491]

Thus, the geographical location of the convent in the New World confirms the need to enforce the rule of the priests of the order - the unorthodox setting calls for ultra-orthodox behaviour.[492]

Moreover, the letter goes as far as to reproduce derogatory notions of the nature of the New Spanish population in order to emphasise the 'otherness' of the New World and to bemoan that at this crucial juncture there is no New Spanish Sta. Teresa:

siéndonos tan necesarias, hanos faltado la fundadora que fué de gran perfección y otras que la siguieron elocuentes, no entran los sujetos que en España, porque en esta tierra no hay lo lucido que allá, y las naturales de acá son poco inclinadas a muchos rigores, a cuya causa hemos temido y tememos decaimientos en la observancia y aún relajaciones ...[493]

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[491] [This convent was founded in this city in the year 1616 and because there were no Carmelite nuns reared in Sta. Teresa's glorious spirit in these provinces and also because the situation at the time did not allow it, the founding mothers (who were two nuns from the Royal convent of Jesús María who observed the Franciscan rule) did not render obedience to the prelates of our order, but to the secular clergy, the Archbishops and the Vicars *in sede vacantis* who until 1656 helped us with our obligations (those of the perfect life). They have always proceeded with great attention, love and veneration for the community and for the observance of our rule, but as they do not profess it, they do not understand it. As far as its practice is concerned they cannot, nor have they, given the advice that is needed for its expeditious keeping. Due to this, we have recognised that not only is its keeping in danger of falling off, but that it has fallen off on occasions. It is true that the prelates have used our Carmelite fathers (who flourish here in all perfection and laudable exemplarity), asking them to come occasionally to confess, preach and talk to us, which has given us some comfort but not what is really necessary because they have come as guests, giving advice timidly and fearfully, as if they were in a stranger's house and not behaving with authority, all of which has caused us fearful confusions and disillusion because those of us who came here expected to find the perfection professed in the Discalced Carmel in the continual exercise of prayer and mortification, with absolute retirement and abstraction from everything created and we cannot find priests who will help us or who understand the finer points of our observances and frequently they hold them as being ridiculous] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 letter to the King, 29 August 1657 unfoliated.

[492] Cf. how the nuns adduce the virtue of the Carmelite fathers. In New Spain, they are the most exemplary of the monastic orders; *Los padres carmelitas señor, son en estos reinos los ejemplares de la perfección monástica y florecen con sujetos aventajados en letras y virtud* [Sir, in this kingdom, the Carmelite fathers are examples of monastic perfection and they flourish as persons endowed with learning and virtue] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 letter to the King, 29 August 1657 unfoliated.

[493] [Being so crucial (yet) the founding mother who was of great perfection is lost to us as are others who followed her eloquently. The individuals that enter in Spain do not enter here because in this land there is not the virtue that is to be found there and here the dispositions are rarely inclined to much rigour and because of this we have feared and fear a falling off of observance and even relaxation] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 letter to the King, 29 August 1657 unfoliated.

The second letter addressed by the *Hijas de la Orden* to the King during the Inquisition process itself, also appeals to the geographical and cultural specificity of San José to strengthen its petition. On this occasion, the argument is less rigorous and more sentimental: the nuns are so far away and this, combined with their sex, makes them such vulnerable creatures that His Majesty must surely listen to their request:

> *... y a los ojos de su Rey, quién podrá decir que no es justo lo que pedimos que esto propio, siendo mujeres flacas e ignorantes y destituídas de todo favor humano y en tan remotas tierras, donde no tenemos quién nos apoye ...* [494]

In order to cap their argument, they give the example of a Carmelite convent in Vitoria, in the Basque country, which was abandoned by its nuns who made the long journey to Logroño in Navarre in order to be able to confess with Carmelite fathers more frequently. Apparently, the Crown placed no obstacles in the way of the rather unusual confessional practices of these nuns. The message of the comparison is clearly that the journey of the New Spanish nuns and their displacement is so much greater it should at least be rewarded with similar royal assent.[495]

Both letters, however, rapidly abandon the theme of New World specificity and revert to a more personal tone. The letter of 1657 goes on to describe the first disastrous Visit as Archbishop that Burqueiro paid to the convent, and contains very real criticism of his behaviour. The nuns argue that his angry outburst was completely unjust and more to do with his unbridled desire for power than with religious scruples about their well-being. They describe Burqueiro as furious and embittered at the fact that some New Spanish women should challenge his power by appealing to the King. Moreover, they claim that he has behaved disrespectfully towards the Carmelite order. The nuns report that the Archbishop's slanders include the claim that the Carmelite friars have divided the convent against him. He has also insultingly compared the friars to the execrable *devotos* who notoriously creep into cloisters, courting nuns and destroying the good name of convents. The *Hijas de la Orden* are even daring enough to criticise the Archbishop's misogyny. This is a risky strategy, given the acceptability of misogynist values in the period, but it is clear that in this context, reporting these words is meant to make Burqueiro sound unreasonable and impassioned:

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[494] [And {who could say to the} King's face that what we ask is not just, and what is more, us being weak and ignorant women, lacking in all human favour and living in such remote lands where we have no one to support us] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f71r letter of 28 January 1661 addressed to the King.

[495] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f71r letter of 28 January 1661 addressed to the King.

por donde nunca convendré en ello y tratar de otra cosa son bachillerías e ignorancias de mujeres, amigas de novedades .. [496]

A very convincing argument follows where the nuns describe how Church officials take up the Archbishop's stance, but are completely ignorant of the gravity of the religious issues at stake. These officials reproduce the Archbishop's anger and disrespect with almost comic exaggeration. Thus, they call the Carmelite rules *inicuas* -iniquitous - (while the nuns affirm their rule to have been recognised by the Pope), and they ask the nuns to remove their veils, when the wearing of them is, in the women's view, ordained by the gospels. These anecdotes provide convincing evidence that the Carmelite rule is being ridiculed rather than merely censored by the Archbishop and his ignorant followers. The most damning indictment of this kind is yet to come though. The Archbishop and his nephew are accused by the nuns of depriving them of confession and of calling their desire for correct fulfilment of their rule a manifestation of spiritual punctiliousness, of *devoción*, a term nearly as damning as that of superstition in this context:

dijo su sobrino, provisor de este arzobispado, que bien podíamos comulgar sin confesar, que nuestros pecados no eran más que devociones, que eso no importaba. Lenguajes, que sólo oírlos nos hace estremecer.[497]

The nuns also complain that the Archbishop has accused them of spending a great deal of the convent's patrimony in their cause, implying that they have misused money given to the convent for spiritual ends for their own worldly interest. The nuns do not deny that they have spent money, but they make clear that it was not the convent's but monies donated by pious persons in favour of their cause.[498]

Both letters discuss at length the need for Carmelite rule in the convent, and their arguments recall those of the nuns requesting Carmelite confessors. The letter of 1657 is especially interesting in its expression of this issue of theory vs. practice through metaphors of natural affiliation and its assumption that it is obvious that the

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[496] [And I will never agree to it or to talk of it, they are foolish games and ignorant things of voluble women] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 letter to the King, 29 August 1657 unfoliated. The phrase *amigo de novedad* is often used to characterise the behaviour of the mob in this period. It connotes instability, troublesomeness.

[497] [His nephew who is *provisor* of this archbishopric said we could perfectly well take communion without confessing, that our sins were nothing more than silly devotions that did not matter. Just hearing such words is enough to make us tremble.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 letter to the King, 29 August 1657 unfoliated.

[498] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 letter to the King, 29 August 1657 unfoliated.

unity of the convent is best safeguarded by assuring a uniformity in religious practices. The Archbishop's lack of respect is blamed for leading to moral relaxation in the convent and the success and unity of a religious institution are linked directly to the exclusivity of its affiliation to a particular religious order:

> *... en este estado Sr. se halla este convento con su prelado y pastor, viviendo en grandísimos aprietos de conciencia y desconsuelos y de él podrá [ ] Vuestra Majestad inferir cuán poco a propósito es para las Carmelitas el gobierno de clérigos y cuán justificada la pretensión de libramos de él, sacada de la experiencia de casos semejantes. Y que ya no sólo tememos no poder guardar nuestro instituto y admitir relajaciones [...] el que tenía obligación de remediarlas nos obliga con violencia a que las hagamos sin dársele nada de desopinar una comunidad que, a costa de mucho padecer, y sin ayuda. se ha procurado conservar en muy buen crédito y en la observancia en que se fundó, que fue mucha. Si bien no en aquel punto, peso y medida que si hubiéramos sido gobernadas de nuestra misma religión. Porque nuestro modo de gobierno no necesita tanto de grandes letras (habiendo tantas en nuestros padres) cuanto de la práctica del instituto, que es oración, penitencia y retiro. ciencia a que no bastan las letras, sino la profesión y ejercicio. ¿Cómo es posible nos dirijan y gobiernen en este trato con acierto quienes, aunque sean muy doctos, no le alcanzan y conocen por la experiencia? Pues no es posible enseñar lo que no se sabe, ni saber lo que no se aprendió. Y más si se llega a tener por inicuas las leyes el prelado que las había de hacer guardar. Rama ha de ser Sr. del mismo árbol la que ha de producir su fruto: y de nuestra misma profesión y lenguaje para ser entendido con acierto y utilidad [...] Y que [ ] se nos quiera conceder el trato y comunicación de muchos confesores y maestros, ¿qué utilidad puede traer la variedad de tratos, juicios y pareceres sino queremos hacer cada uno el suyo, sino ajustamos ninguno al cierto y verdadero? y queriendo regimos todos nos hacemos como todos, y vendrá a faltar la observancia del principal instituto y la paz y a convertirse en cisma de diversos sentimientos esta comunidad.*[499]

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[499] [This convent's relations with its prelate and pastor is to be found in this state, undergoing great pangs of conscience and disillusions and from this Your Majesty may see how inappropriate it is for Carmelites to be governed by the secular clergy and how justified our desire to free ourselves {from them} is, {this being supported} by evidence from the experience of similar cases. We are now no longer only afraid of not being able to keep our Holy Institute and of falling into relaxation {...} and the person responsible for remedying this in fact violently obliges us to fall into it, and this community cannot complain. {It} has, through much suffering and without any help, attempted to keep the good name of the religious observance in which it was founded which was great, though not as ultimately perfect as it would have been had we been governed by our own order. Our method of government does not need great learning (though our fathers have this in abundance) rather the practice of the Institute, which consists in prayer, penitence and abstraction, a science for which learning is not sufficient but profession and practice {are needed}. How can we be governed well in this by those who, though very learned, do not have the knowledge and learning of experience. For it is impossible to teach what one does not know or to know what one has not learnt. And even worse if the rule the prelate is obliged to keep he in fact considers to be iniquitous. Sir, only a branch from the same tree will produce fruit; and only the same language and profession will be understood successfully and usefully {...} And of what use can the concession of many confessors and teachers be to us, and the variety of opinions and points of view, if none of us wants to go our independent way, if none of us follows the correct and true path? And the fact that everyone wants to govern us will mean we become like everyone else and we will lose the observance of the main teachings and the peace will become division through the multiplication of affiliations in this community.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 letter to the King, 29 August 1657 unfoliated.

The sophistication of this argument, where the Archbishop's disrespect for the rule leads directly to the need to reform the structure of power and replace its representative with a Carmelite, is not to be found in the letter written in the midst of the trial which is much more concerned to exonerate the *Hijas de la Orden* from any charge of theological speculation about the abilities of priests of different religious orders to absolve sins, under which the early letter could itself clearly be considered a suspect document. The letter written during the trial concentrates instead on the issue of experience and specialisation. It emphasises the orthodoxy of the Carmelites - obviously the charge of heresy had become a reality at this point - saying that it is not that the Carmelite nuns do not consider other priests capable of absolving their sins, it is simply that they need specialised advice about the Carmelite rule, which only a Carmelite father can provide.

> *... nosotras aunque no en faltar a la fe católica con que creemos todos sus artículos [ ] la fuerza que tienen las absoluciones de todos los sacerdotes de cualquier estado o religión que [ ] para quedar absueltas de cuantos pecados, confesaremos, por muy enormes, grandes que sean, y no es dudar en ésto haber pedido algunas veces al Sr. Arzobispo, como nuestro prelado, para confesarnos con algún religioso de nuestra orden, pretendiendo en ésto solamente buscar el consuelo y satisfacción de comunicar nuestros escrúpulos o dudas en la puntual observancia y guarda de la regla de su misma religión que profesamos...*[500]

How much more politic than its predecessor the 1661 letter is, is evident from the way it gives few details about what has actually happened and places the force of its power to convince on the affective link that exists between the King and the Carmelite order. It is not surprising thus to find the Carmelites founding their case in history, arguing that they have always enjoyed Royal privileges and that the King should continue this tradition of royal support for the religious order:

> *... como lo hemos experimentado las más antiguas y que hemos experimentado el gobierno con oficio de preladas y esto mejor cosa Vuestra Majestad que nadie se lo puede decir, pues ha heredado de sus santos padres y abuelos, nuestros Reyes y Señores, el honrar y favorecer a Sta. Teresa nuestra madre y a toda su religión del Carmen, haciéndole singulares favores.*[501]

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[500] [We are not at fault with the Catholic Faith, believing all its articles { } the power the absolution of priests of any estate or religious order have to absolve us of all the sins we might confess, however terrible they are, and it is not because we doubt this that we have sometimes requested the Archbishop as our prelate if we may confess with a priest of our own order. In this we have wanted only to find the comfort and satisfaction of communicating our scruples and doubts about concrete religious observance and the keeping of the rule of the order we both profess] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f68r letter of 28 January 1661 addressed to the King.

[501] [As we the oldest {in the community} have witnessed the government of prelates and this could not be known better than by someone like your Majesty because you have inherited from your holy fathers and

The letter ends with an appeal to personal experience and knowledge, in an attempt to guarantee the ultimate authority of its arguments. Mariana de la Encarnación (the surviving founding mother), says that in her personal experience of convent life, being governed by the secular prelate is, in time, a recipe for the destruction of the holiness of any convent:

> *... la larga experiencia por [haber] estado en otros conventos antes que viniese a la fundación de éste [...] según lo que he conocido y visto en tantos años [ ] del gobierno del ordinario, que no es posible conseguir perfección mientras él durare, y viéndome yo tan cercana a mi muerte y otras ancianas que con grande trabajos [ ] ido plantando la perfección, temiendo que las nuevas y mozas no tan arraigadas en la virtud desfallecerán [ ] este convento y relajará.*[502]

The power of this statement, given her status and the fact that she says that she and other nuns in the convent are nearing their deaths, is considerable.

The *Clérigas Monigotas*

Becerra's Testimony: Issues of Subjectivity

The first declaration made by Luis Becerra, a fifty six year old *criollo* from Tasco, begins by describing how he was appointed by Archbishop Burqueiro to replace Jacinto de la Serna as chaplain of San José whenever the latter was sick. Becerra comes to the Inquisition bearing letters written by the nuns he confesses in the convent, which denounce the terrible situation there and ask the Church authorities to intervene. These are the declarations of the so-called *Clérigas monigotas* - those nuns who range themselves on the side of the Archbishop and the secular clergy. Becerra's tone throughout this written declaration is very exact and meticulous. His writing is attentive to detail and not without a certain affected stylishness.

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grandfathers our Kings and Lords, the according of honour to Sta. Teresa our Mother and to all her order of the Carmel, doing us particular favours ...] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f71r letter of 28 January 1661 addressed to the King.

[502] [long experience because of having been in other convents before coming to found this one {...} thanks to which I have known and seen over many years that whilst in the government of the secular clergy, it is impossible to gain perfection, and seeing myself so close to death and the other old nuns with great spiritual troubles {I} have tried to cultivate perfection, fearing that the new young nuns, not so given to virtue would weaken and the convent would become relaxed] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f71r letter of 28 January 1661 addressed to the King.

Becerra makes clear that of the two groups into which the convent is divided, that faithful to the Archbishop is in a minority. The other group of nuns, apart from being numerically superior also, according to him, uses cunning and deception. The main accusation, however, is less dramatic and strikes a considerably more solemn tone:

> *... ha muchos años que pretenden y solicitan con exactas y exquisitas diligencias eximirse de la obediencia ordinarios [sic], para lo cual han despachado diversos petitorios así a su Majestad, como a la Sta. sede Apostólica, lo cual es público y notorio en esta ciudad, por intervención y mano de los religiosos de nuestra Sra. del Carmen de esta provincia y de sus procuradores, que van a los reinos de Castilla a sus negocios y ocurren a la sede Apostólica, en cuya pretensión han gastado parte muy considerable de sus rentas, sin licencia expresa de sus legítimos prelados ...*[504]

Becerra goes on to explain exactly what the position of the *Hijas de la Orden* is on members of other religious orders. He repeats that they claim not to disrespect the learning of these men, but rather to question their authority in matters of practice. Poised on the edge of expressing the suspicions he harbours about the doctrinal error the nuns may have fallen into, Becerra prefaces his denunciation with a meditation on the value of unity in a convent:

> *Habiendo, pues, yo reconocido, en el tiempo que he asistido a dichas religiosas, esta discordia y división y meditando con mi humilde inteligencia cuánto ama Dios Nuestro Señor la concordia y paz, especialmente en el estado regular ...*[505]

Having thus established his own orthodoxy and reminded the readers of his piety, Becerra reveals his doubts about the orthodoxy of the *Hijas de la Orden*. Had their cause been a recent one, he claims he would have dismissed it as stemming from a personal disagreement between nuns and their Archbishop. But the lengthy history of the quarrel, and the various Archbishops who have been treated disrespectfully, make him suspect that the dislike the *Hijas de la Orden* have for the secular clergy is

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[504] [They have for many years tried and requested, with precise and elaborate strategies to remove themselves from the obedience of the secular clergy. In order to do so, they have sent out different petitions both to his Majesty as well as to the Holy See - all of which is public knowledge in this city - through the intervention and help of the Carmelite friars of this Province and of their servants who go to Castille and to the Holy See on their behalf. They have spent a considerable part of their income without having the specific permission of their legitimate prelates] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f198r Letter Luis Becerra, 27 January 1661.

[505] [I thus having recognised during the time that I assisted these nuns this discord and division and having meditated, with my humble intelligence, how much Our Lord loves concord and peace, especially in the regular clergy] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f198r Letter Luis Becerra, 27 January 1661.

theologically founded. Becerra asserts that the behaviour of the nuns is born out of a rejection of the purity and integrity of the Catholic faith:

> *... ponderando yo que cuando este intento se pudiera paliar con algún pretexto de agravios fingidos y supuestos contra la persona de este su prelado, pudiera illudirse [sic] cualquier discurso prudente a no ser tan antigua este pretensión en dichas religiosas que solicitan esta exempcion [sic] de la jurisdicción ordinaria de los señores arzobispos, siendo evidente que no milita la misma razón y motivo en éste que en sus antecesores, donde se infiere por necesaria consecuencia que el odio, o por mejor decir la aversión suya, es contra todo el clero y que ésta nace de algún origen muy sospechoso contra la pureza o integridad de nuestra santa fe Católica ...*[506]

From this moment on, Becerra's testimony abandons any pretence at objectivity and pursues a wholly logical argument to illogical conclusions. In order to convince the Inquisitors that the *Hijas de la Orden* are in a doctrinally suspect position, he describes a number of nightmare scenarios which could ensue from the opinions he believes them to hold. The first involves a feminine usurpation of the masculine privilege of ordination:

> *... de no tener dichas religiosas al Sr. Arzobispo por su legítimo prelado, sino a los que lo son de la sagrada religión de Carmelitas descalzos, por ser de un mismo instituto y regla, se seguiría que sino hubiese en esta ciudad y provincia religiosos carmelitas, no tendrían prelado alguno estas religiosas a quien obedecer, y que pudiesen hacer profesión a lo que fuesen, entrando en manos de una mujer, y que podría residir la jurisdicción espiritual en el sexo femenino.*[507]

In his second scenario, Becerra suggests that the nuns of the Conceptionist convent who are Franciscan, but who have professed under the secular clergy, could eventually marry if they followed the teaching of the rebellious Carmelite nuns because their vow of chastity would not be considered solemn since it had not been made under, in their terms, a 'legitimate' prelate from their same order.[508] Finally, in order to

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[506] [I thought that this cause, if it had not been so old, could be justified, prudently, through the imagined and illusory affronts {the nuns} may have considered the Archbishop to have done them. But the cause of these nuns who campaign to be exempted from the jurisdiction of the secular authority of the Archbishops is evidently not moved by the same motives as in other previous attempts, from which we make the necessary conclusion that the hate, or more precisely, the aversion they feel is directed against the clergy as a whole, and that this has a very suspicious origin, born against the purity or integrity of our holy Catholic faith] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f198v Letter Luis Becerra, 27 January 1661.

[507] [As these nuns do not hold the Archbishop to be their legitimate prelate, but rather the Discalced Carmelites, because they are of the same order and Institution, it follows that were there no Carmelite friars in this city or province, they would have no prelate at all whom to obey and thus those who entered could profess as they came, with a woman, and so spiritual jurisdiction could come to reside in the female sex.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f199r Letter Luis Becerra, 27 January 1661.

[508] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f199r Letter Luis Becerra, 27 January 1661.

emphasise the hegemonic power the Carmelite order would come to possess if its convents and monasteries came under no external authority, he argues that the nuns would even challenge the power of any Pope who was not a Carmelite. This world-turned-upside-down has, in Becerra's imagination, already become a partial reality through the actions of the nuns. The fact that they chose to go directly to the Crown for aid reveals their belief that the King is the true head of the Church - a notoriously heretical position:

> *... dice la dicha madre María de Sta. Inés y las de su séquito que su Majestad, que Dios guarde, como padre piadoso, las había exempto [sic] de la jurisdicción del ordinario y que por esta causa no debían obedecerle, en que sin duda alguna hacen a su Majestad cabeza de la iglesia o al menos que por el Real Patronato tiene poder para transferir a las religiosas de unos prelados a otros, propuesta, como se deja entender, de muy mala consecuencia al estado regular y a las demás religiosas de los otros monasterios de este reino*[509]

Becerra's tendency to be carried away by his own rhetoric comes to a spectacular turning point when he provides another theory as to why the Carmelite friars might want to rule over female convents of the order. Becerra sketches a scene where the friars exploit the difference of the New World in order to justify greater leniency in the cloister, attract richer novices and thus equip themselves with a willing female workforce as well as a safe-house for their financial dealings:

> *Y el haber solicitado los religiosos mismos carmelitas poner [ ] debajo de su dirección y dominio este monasterio de religiosas con pretexto de ser todos de un mismo instituto y orden, pudiera atribuirse a celo santo, sino ocurriese luego a la consideración que este monasterio, con la opinión de austero y santo, podía servir de anzuelo para muchas conveniencias temporales, admitiendo a su ingreso hijas de vecinos de esta ciudad, ricos y poderosos, dando alguna latitud a sus reglas con pretexto del temperamento de este reino, donde es necesario dar más alivio a las religiosas como a sujetos más débiles. A que se llega el poder tener en dicho monasterio religiosas que atendiesen al regalo de los religiosos enfermos, sazonándoles algunos pucheros y finalmente, que podrían suplirse algunos quie [ ] de sus rentas con las dotes y rentas de dicho monasterio, habiendo de administrar esta hacienda por su mano ...* [510]

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[509] [And the said María de Sta. Inés and those of her faction say that His Majesty (may God keep him) acting as a pious father, had exempt them from the jurisdiction of the Archbishop and that because of this they should not obey him. And in this, without a doubt, they make His Majesty head of the Church, or at least imply that Royal authority has the power to transfer nuns from one prelate to another; a suggestion which could have, as is apparent, very evil consequences for the monastic estate and for the other nuns in other monasteries in this kingdom] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f199v - 200r Letter Luis Becerra, 27 January 1661.

[510] [The request of these Carmelite fathers to have this convent subject to their authority, under the pretext that they are of the same order and institution, could be attributed to holy zeal, if it did not then come to mind that perhaps this convent, with its saintly and austere renown, might serve as a bait for many temporal conveniences. Thus, rich and powerful residents of this city could put their daughters in it, if its rules were interpreted with some latitude, under the pretext that the nature of this kingdom made it

It becomes apparent that Becerra's declaration pivots on extraordinarily strong and exaggerated fears of female power. In a curious and very revealing moment in the testimony, he explains the origins of the division in the convent as arising from a diabolic female friendship - that between María de Sta. Inés and the Vicereign, the Duchess of Albuquerque. He claims that through this friendship, the nuns were able to influence the Viceroy and advance their cause. He even goes so far as to imply that between them these two women, in a typically feminine brand of conspiracy, may have misled the Viceroy.[511]

Predictably, Becerra's protection against the fears about female intelligence he reveals is his own learning. His desire not to be caught out by María de Sta. Inés's cunning is especially transparent in the comments he makes on a scurrilous anecdote about her. María de Sta. Inés is rumoured to have said that she could sleep innocently with a monk in her bed. Becerra does not dismiss this story for its bad taste or impiety - perhaps the most obvious godly reactions. Rather, he attributes complex theological signification to it, and attempts to construct another argument, itself designed to display María de Sta. Inés's artifice and intelligence in maligning the secular clergy:

> *... se pueda interpretar que el fin a que miró sólo fue a provocar a los religiosos a alguna torpeza, siendo el pretexto que se toma para pedir religiosos de su misma orden y estar a la obediencia de sus superiores la mayor perfección, y que los clérigos no entendemos de espíritu ni sabemos discernirlos. Fuera dar a entender que ha llegado la susodicha a tan alto grado de perfección que pudiera estar con un varón a su lado en un propio lecho sin riesgo de pecado, que sólo se lee del sublime espíritu y mortificado cuerpo del Sto. Bernardo Abad de Carvajal.*[512]

María de Sta. Inés's attempt to promote her saintly image is, in Becerra's opinion, also clear from her sedulous correspondence. Despite the careful construction

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necessary to give more comfort to nuns who were weaker, and so there would be nuns in the convent that would tend to the comfort of sick monks, preparing various dishes for them. Finally, some of the rents {of the monks} could be supplemented by the dowries and rents of the convent, the monks administering {the convent's} goods for themselves] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f201r Letter Luis Becerra, 27 January 1661.

[511] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f200r Letter Luis Becerra, 27 January 1661.

[512] [It could be interpreted that the end she looked for was only to lead the clerics to say crude words, the justification for asking for priests of the same order and to be under their obedience being that with them greater perfection is possible (and that we clerics do not understand things of the spirit, nor can we discern them). And so she wanted to imply that she had reached such a state of perfection that she could lie with a man at her side in her own bed without danger of sin - and this is only known of the sublime spirit and mortified body of the Saint Bernard, Prior of Carvajal.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f200v Letter Luis Becerra, 27 January 1661.

of his own prose, Becerra indulges in the commonplace metaphors of writing as artifice and deceit, without the least trace of self-consciousness:

> *[personas] de todos estados y sexos, y no hay monasterio alguno [de] religiosas de esta ciudad donde no tenga correspondencia secreta, y en especial con las que tienen opinión de más modestas y virtuosas, haciéndose maestra grande de perfección y espíritu. Porque en ésto de escribir papeles es habilísima y avisada y todas la tienen en opinión de muy discreta y santa, y para envolver en este embeleso a las de su séquito, hace que otras escriban, dictándoles ella lo que han de escribir y otras mañas de esta calidad de que pueden originarse graves inconvenientes y perdición de almas*[513]

Luis Becerra's interrogation begins the day after he presents his written denunciation discussed above and continues for at least three months and probably more. The Inquisition record is truncated and Becerra's last appearance before the Tribunal is dated 9th March. The final documents in the file include a letter from Becerra asking to be released from the Inquisition's prison so as to allow him to earn the money he requires to survive by singing masses and hearing confessions. He is given permission to do so, but forbidden to go anywhere near the Carmelite convent. Another letter from the Treasurer of the Inquisition recommends that he be reinterned for fear that he will default on his debt to the prison.

What follows is an analysis of the whole of Becerra's evidence, as presented in his interrogations. I have tried to describe any development or change in his story, but the main purpose has been to study the kinds of authority over knowledge of the cloister which are acceptable to the Inquisition, and whether these are substantially different from the authority people connected to the convent claim to have over their experience and words in other contexts. The issue of personal experience and interpretation is of course an element common to all forensic rhetoric - jurists from Justinian to Napoleon have had as an ideal rulings based on fact, unmediated by personal experience, open to only one interpretation.[514] In this respect it is instructive to

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[513] [People of all estates and sexes, and there is not a monastery of nuns in this city with which she does not correspond secretly and especially with those which have the fame of being most modest and virtuous and in this way she makes herself out to be a great teacher of perfection and spirit. In writing she is very able and well informed and everyone thinks she is very clever and saintly and in order to deceive her followers also, she makes others write, dictating to them, and from this and other such artifices of its kind, great inconveniences and the loss of souls may arise.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f201r Letter Luis Becerra, 27 January 1661. It is interesting to note here that Andrea is accused of taking over the priestly role of enforcing writing upon women.

[514] For a discussion of jurisprudence's uneasy relation to interpretation see Donald Kelley, 'Civil Science in the Renaissance: The Problem of Interpretation' in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, Anthony Pagden Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)57-78. Kelley's comments on rhetoric being the nexus where the concerns of civil science and Humanism crossed are particularly

keep in mind Julio Caro Baroja's characterisation of the Inquisitor as a man of Law rather than a man of God.[515]

Throughout the questioning Becerra undergoes, it is clear that the Inquisition wants to demolish his presentation of the evidence as *ciencia cierta* (true knowledge) by showing it to be conjecture. The Inquisition's most serious charge is that Becerra has deliberately distorted his sources, presenting events as true, while in fact he only knows them by hearsay. The tone of questioning throughout is very aggressive and it is not surprising that Becerra is soon overwhelmed and begins to retract:

> *Dijo que en la audiencia de ayer estuvo turbado por la reverencia que se debe a este Sto. Tribunal, viendo que conjerian [sic] su simpleza, y así pide y suplica se le vuelva a leer lo que respondió a las preguntas que se le hicieron para reconocer si hay en ellas algo que enmendar*[516]

However, the Inquisition is quick to destroy any line of defence Becerra comes up with. When he claims that his declaration has in part been made only because of his great trust in and admiration for the Archbishop, the Inquisitors ask if his devotion to the Archbishop is such that he would be willing to lie to the Tribunal on Burqueiro's behalf. Becerra denies this, but defends the fact that he presented information which he considered to have come from trustworthy sources - the Archbishop and the four nuns he confesses in San José - as if it were first hand.[517] It is clear that this is the nub of the Inquisition's dislike of Becerra's testimony. However much he attributes virtue to the people who provided him with information, the fact remains that he failed to acknowledge his sources and attempted to attribute personal authority to the evidence he presented.[518] That the belief accorded to someone's words in this context is intimately connected to this person's own subjectivity, their sense of 'self', is evident from Becerra's indignation at not being believed. Moreover, he sees his own reaction

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pertinent, as is his assertion that legal error was clearly felt not only to undermine justice, but to lead to political and social corruption.

[515] *... el inquisidor no sale tanto del campo de la pura Teología como del estudio del Derecho canónico: es jurista, hombre de leyes, antes que teólogo especulativo. Tiende al racionalismo de una manera que no se imaginaron quienes no han estudiado directamente sus actuaciones* [The Inquisitor comes not so much from the field of pure theology as from the study of Cannon Law, he is a jurist, a man of the Law, before being a speculative theologian. He leans towards rationalism in a way unimagined by those who have not directly studied his actions] in Caro Baroja (1992)31.

[516] [He said that in yesterday's audience he was made nervous by the reverence in which this Tribunal ought to be held and because of his simplicity and so he asks and prays that he may have his answers read to him again so that he may amend any mistakes] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f209r Luis Becerra, 28 January 1661.

[517] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f209r Luis Becerra, 28 January 1661.

[518] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f209r - 210r Luis Becerra, 28 January 1661.

as being a natural one, asserting that it is of course *personally* offensive not to be believed, but that the declaration should still be made for the glory of the true faith:

> *... y sabe este declarante que el testigo no ha de mirar el interés que puede seguir de que se le dé crédito o no, aunque tiene por cierto que en cualquier hombre honrado es cosa cierta de grande sentimiento que no se le dé crédito.*[519]

Though he acknowledges the importance of a sense of honour and of 'self' in giving evidence, Becerra rejects all accusations of any personal gain he may make through his denunciation. He declares he is not especially fond of the Archbishop, or of the nuns, and is not looking for another ecclesiastical post:

> *... y este declarante no es parcial del Sr. Arzobispo ni por complacerle hizo dicho papel, ni sabe que en este negocio recibiera gusto ni tampoco tiene estrecha amistad con los parciales alegados de dicho Sr. Arzobispo ni tiene amistad estrecha con dichas 4 religiosas [...] y este declarante no ha pretendido ni pretende beneficio ni capellanía ni otra conveniencia que haya de correr por mano de dicho Sr. Arzobispo [...] y quien más ha huído de dicho Sr. Arzobispo [...] le ha sido este declarante por vivir retirado.*[520]

Clearly, the 'self', if it is the guarantor of the truth of events, is itself on trial. This moment in Becerra's interrogation is very revealing of the way in which subjectivity is perceived in this Inquisitorial context. It is clearly linked to notions of honour and professionalism - both spheres in which women are marginal. Nevertheless, as I will discuss later, the women interrogated do use refined or modulated versions of both these concepts - their honour and professionalism as contemplative nuns.

The judicial tenor of the knowledge acceptable to the Inquisition is made perfectly apparent by the series of incredibly detailed questions the judges pose Becerra. These make clear that the only truth acceptable to them is that of knowledge sustained by personal experience:

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[519] [And this speaker knows that a witness should disregard what profit could ensue from his being believed or not, even though he holds it to be a source of shame for any honourable man not to be believed] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f246r Luis Becerra, 04? February 1661.

[520] [And this witness is not on the Archbishop's side, nor has he written the paper to please the Archbishop, nor does he know if the Archbishop is pleased that this trial is taking place, nor does he have any special friendship with the faction of the said Archbishop, nor with the four nuns [...] and this witness has not and does not pretend to gain any position or chaplaincy or any other post which would be in the Archbishop's power to give [...] moreover this witness has in fact distanced himself from the said Archbishop because of his desire to live a retired life] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f252r Luis Becerra, 7? February 1661.

Preguntado en qué ocasiones y tiempos se lo ha dicho el Sr. Arzobispo y en presencia de quién o si era por la mañana o por la tarde y qué tiempo hacía, y adónde está y a qué propósito se lo dijo[521]

It is clear that the Tribunal considers Becerra guilty of having extended the value of his 'self', his subjective knowledge, to things over which it could have no authority. This emphasis on personal experience means that the narrations of events which are considered acceptable are those which provide an abundance of detail, of circumstances, not those which attempt to mediate through interpretation. In an effort to substantiate the evidence he has given, Becerra tries to reconstruct the circumstances in which he heard the evidence he presents. Not even this is greeted kindly by the Inquisition. His claim that much of what he has declared was gleaned during confession with the four nuns is rapidly criticised. He is reminded he should be listening and absolving during confession, not chatting about convent politics and then spreading gossip.[522] The final question posed by the judges in this particular audience is remarkably sarcastic, bizarre, and notable for its obviously leading qualities; it is clearly an attempt to get Becerra to incriminate himself. His defence is forgetfulness, a sudden loss of memory which will serve him well on future occasions also:

Fuele dicho que supuesto que no fuese confesor y supuesto que no le mandase el Sr. Arzobispo tener conversaciones con las monjas y supuesto que ellas son tan religiosas y observantes de su regla, ¿qué otra cosa podría comunicar con ellas más de lo que ha dicho?
Dijo que no se acuerda y ésto responde[523]

Clearly, for the Inquisition the status of information gleaned in confession, quite apart from issues of confidentiality, is problematic because of its mediated nature. Later in the interrogation, the Inquisitors return to this subject and cross-examine Becerra on the theological niceties of confession. Becerra is very careful to specify that the things that he reveals were said confidentially after or before a confession, but certainly not during it. The Inquisitors ask him on what authority he thinks it licit to reveal even this kind of information, and Becerra is led into making a vague comment about his reading

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521 [Asked on what occasions and when has the Archbishop said it to him, and in whose presence and whether it was in the morning or afternoon and what the weather was like and where it was and why it was said] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f210r Luis Becerra, 28 January 1661.

522 AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f213r Luis Becerra, 30 January 1661.

523 [And it was put to him, supposing that he were not a confessor and supposing the Archbishop did not send him to talk with the nuns and supposing they were not pious and observant of their rule, what more could he talk to them about than he has? And he said that he does not remember and this is his reply] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f214r Luis Becerra, 30th January 1661.

of spiritual authors and specialised books on confession. He claims not to be able to remember any of the titles or authors.[524]

Consonant with its dislike of any sign of mediation or interpretation between the events it examines and the witness denouncing them, the Inquisition is predictably particularly displeased with Becerra's written testimony. Writing is the surest sign of mediation, of ratiocination and thus, in this particular logic, of falsehood. Becerra tries to defend himself by saying that his prolific style and discursive prose are more revealing of the awe he feels for the authority of the Tribunal than of any artifice, and thus serve to confirm his honesty rather than his insincerity:

> *Dijo que todas estas palabras puso considerando la gravedad de la materia y calidad de las personas, y su poca o ninguna autoridad de él. Y para declarar mejor el afecto de su alma con que vino a dar dicha noticia, y que puede ser que algunas palabras de dicha cláusula parezcan superfluas, pero que a él le pareció que cualquier rendimiento y obsequio con que se hablen de cosas de Dios Sr. Nuestro y de este Sto. Tribunal y al afecto del ánimo, siempre serán cortas, y ésto responde y no otra cosa*[525]

Nevertheless, Becerra's attempts to use learned language and his professional knowledge as a priest are continually ridiculed by the members of the Tribunal, who try to lead him into making serious theological errors in his testimony. Once again, Becerra's defence is ignorance:

> *Fuele dicho que, según lo que deja dicho, no conformaban todas en sustancia ni en sentido físico ni metafísico, que así se le dice para más explicación y poder responder, pues dice haber estudiado teología*
> *Dijo que no podía convenir en sustancia las [ ] o la cosa que decía una y no decía la otra y que [ ] con su comprensión no puede responder más que [ ] y esto responde*[526]

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[524] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f244v - 245r Luis Becerra, 04th? February 1661. Later in the interrogation, during the dissection of the letter he has written, the Inquisitors try to probe Becerra's theological learning, asking him from where he gets the authority to affirm certain of his ideas. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f249v Luis Becerra, 7? February 1661. Becerra's reluctance to enter any kind of learned discussion with the Inquisitors is understandable. Nevertheless, they press him continually on this issue of confession and finally he mentions several authorities and books including Ledesma, Villalobos and Machado. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f272r Luis Becerra, 10? February 1661.

[525] [He said that all these words were written taking into consideration the seriousness of the matter and the importance of the persons and his little or non-existent authority and that in order to express better the feelings of his soul, he came to give this news and it may be that some words in the said clause seem superfluous, but he thought that any prostration and humbleness with which one speaks of the things of God our Father and of this Tribunal and of the feelings of the soul could never be enough and he says this and nothing more.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f217r Luis Becerra, 1 February 1661.

[526] [It was put to him that according to what he has said they {the nuns} did not agree on everything, either physically or metaphysically and this is said to him in order to explain better and so he may answer, because he claims to have studied theology. And he said they did not agree on the substance { } or that one thing was said by one and not by the other { } and that with his understanding of things he cannot reply in any other way and this is what he replies.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f222r - 222v Luis Becerra, 4 February 1661.

At one point, the Tribunal accuses Becerra of having dictated the letters he presents as the nuns' own work. He absolutely denies this, pointing out their rude style as evidence of their feminine authorship.[527]

As their interrogation proceeds, it becomes increasingly obvious that the Inquisitors' chief accusation against Becerra is linked to questions of writing and style. He is suspect because he has elaborated his evidence, has constructed it and has thus changed it from knowledge authorised by personal experience to a vendetta disqualified precisely by the abuse of personal or subjective experience. The Inquisitors goad him by suggesting that his denunciation has been dictated to him; any other honest person would have come and made a simple declaration rather than offering a prepared text:

> *Fuele dicho que supuesto que tuvo memoria para escribir un papel tan prolijo más bien tendría memoria para venir a este Sto. Tribunal y decir en muy breve lo tocante a nuestra santa fe, diciendo lo que se acordase, y si algo se le olvidase decirlo en ésta o en otras muchas audiencias. Que quién le ha enseñado que los que vienen al Sto. Oficio a decir de oídas han de decir por fuera todo lo que se contiene en su papel, que en haberlo escrito con tales circunstancias se conoce que a él se lo dictaron y dispusieron [ ] y le obligaron a escribirlo con todas las dichas ponderaciones y particularidades - que diga la verdad prieta [sic] al jurado*[528]

At certain points, the Inquisitors, moved by what appears to be frustration at the pretension of Becerra's writing, enter into genuine argument with him. They point out for instance, that the fact that the other nuns confess with the priest Mercado, a cleric, is evidence that their hatred of the secular clergy cannot be universal. After various questions in this vein, Becerra is reduced to saying that the nuns' behaviour did indeed only malign the honour of clerics and did not constitute the taking up a doctrinal position. He is asked if this can then mean the nuns have committed a doctrinal sin, and he is forced to admit it cannot. The ridiculous exaggeration of his terms is made patent by the judges' comment:

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[527] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f223r Luis Becerra, 4 February 1661.

[528] [It was put to him that supposing he remembered enough to write such a long paper, surely he should have remembered enough to come to this Holy Tribunal and declare very briefly the things concerning our Holy Faith, saying what he remembered and if he had forgotten something he could have said it in this or in any other audience. Who has taught him that the persons who come to this Holy Office to declare what they have heard have to say everything at once as it is set out in his paper and that in writing it in such circumstances, it is obvious that it was dictated to him and set out for him and that he was obliged to write it with all the speculations and special points and that he tell the Tribunal the whole truth] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f224r Luis Becerra, 7 February 1661.

Fuele dicho que según lo que él deja dicho, proposición será de fe hablar mal del clero en común y ponerles nombres[529]

This wearing down of his evidence continues throughout the trial, and Becerra gradually backs down, his accusation descending from one of heresy to one of undue favouritism.[530] Thus, he goes from 'censuring' to 'believing something is suspicious' to wanting to 'bring it to the attention' of the Tribunal.[531]

The most spectacular example of how the Inquisition deconstructs Becerra's denunciation is however its 'reading' of his written deposition. A week into the interrogation, the Tribunal decides to proceed by asking him to attribute every single sentence in his letter either to 'personal knowledge' to 'hearsay' or to 'other'. This exercise leads Becerra into an analysis of his own writing which is extraordinary - an attempt to trace the authority of every word.[532] As the interrogation proceeds, the discussion about authority acquires a more and more specialised vocabulary. The Inquisitors ask Becerra the difference between 'declaring' something and 'notifying' about it. Becerra's answer to this question proves to be unsatisfactory, and plunges the interrogation into an arcane discussion about the status of truth in different types of discourse:

> *Fuele dicho que no se le pregunta si el informe que él dice [ ] hecho a este Tribunal es informe en derecho o sino informe en justicia, que éste se puede defender en derecho [ ] teologal, en medicina y filosofía y en los [ ] ares que supuesto que el suyo no fue informe en derecho, diga en qué ciencia o arte fue informe y no delación* [533]

The unavoidably artificial nature of the relation of writing to reality is exhibited again and again in the Inquisition's somewhat absurd attempt to analyse each part of Becerra's letter in terms of its authorising moment. The questions attempt to 'parse' the letter in terms of Truth, and obviously continually come up against parts of writing which have been neither 'heard' nor 'experienced' nor 'presumed' but simply 'written'. These are the parts of Becerra's letter which show it to be a narration of facts and which,

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529 [It was put to him that according to what he has said it would be an issue of faith to speak badly of the clergy in general and to call them names] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f217r Luis Becerra, 1 February 1661.

530 AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f217r Luis Becerra, 1 February 1661.

531 AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f235v - 240v Luis Becerra, 11 February 1661.

532 AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f248r - 248v Luis Becerra, 6 February 1661.

533 [It was put to him that he had not been asked if the report he made to this Tribunal is a report in law or in justice and that this {report} could be defended in theological justice, in medicine and in philosophy and in the { } and supposing his was not a report in law, he should say in what science or art it was a report and not a declaration] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f258v Luis Becerra, 9 February 1661.

unsurprisingly, he is unable to attribute to any authority, they being the pure materiality of writing:

> *Y preguntándole que supuesto que no asigna dicha cláusula entre las oídas ni presumidas, diga cómo la escribió*
> *Dijo que teniendo por verdad el fundamento que para este discurso le dieron la religiosa o religiosas citadas en el margen de su papel, hizo discurso que es el que se contiene en dicha cláusula y éste no se lo dijeron dichas religiosas sino que lo indujo por razón, y ésto responde*[534]

The attitude taken up by the Inquisition in relation to Becerra is clear from both the aggressive questions put to him and from the internal memos recorded during the trial. It is obvious that at least one of the judges, Luis Sanz de Mañozca, considers Becerra guilty and wishes to carry on questioning him to get to the bottom of the affair. All of the judges certainly want to keep Becerra in prison until they have questioned the nuns and most importantly Andrea de San Francisco, the chief witness in the whole affair, no doubt in order to be able to compare their respective testimonies.[535] We must now, therefore, turn to her testimony.

Andrea de San Francisco: the Chief Witness

Andrea's evidence before the Tribunal consists of both written testimony and oral examination in various audiences. Her written testimony is a letter, presented by Luis Becerra to the Tribunal along with his own deposition and other letters written by nuns. Her letter claims that it is the use of ill-sounding, *malsonante*, language in the convent that drives her to write. This clearly places the sin she hints at in the realm of doctrine and speculation, but does not define it. Andrea de San Francisco goes on to recount how certain nuns in San José tell the story of a Spanish Carmelite convent that went for months without confession rather than receive it from the secular clergy. Andrea claims that these nuns, whom she calls *Hijas de la Orden*, consider her excommunicate because of the obedience she gives to the Archbishop. She also

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[534] [And having asked him how he wrote this clause which he does not place in the categories either of 'overheard' or of 'presumed'. He said that holding what these nuns, whom he cites in the margins, said to him to be the Truth, he reasoned what was contained in the said clause and it was not said to him by the nuns, rather he perceived it through reason and this is his reply] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f276r Luis Becerra, 9 February 1661 This accusation of the necessarily duplicitous nature of a written testimony and how it must perforce be slanted in a particular party's favour is repeated on f259r.

[535] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f219v - 220r Luis Becerra, 1 February 1661.

repeats the insults to which she, her companions, and the Archbishop himself have all been subjected. Her letter becomes confused at this stage with a variety of stories about what the *Hijas de la Orden* have said about their own spiritual capacities and about the letters and papers they have sent in connection with their cause. Andrea ends by claiming the *Hijas de la Orden* represent themselves as martyrs and the Archbishop as their oppressive tyrant and that there is much more she could say, but that she prefers to remain silent out of modesty.[536]

What is clear from the letter is that the pure doctrinal content of Andrea's accusation is very low. The only certainty is that the *Hijas de la Orden* have been behaving in ways entirely unfitting to nuns, but it remains unclear whether they have been thinking or believing in unorthodox ways. This uncertainty in Andrea's letter points to the more general problem of access to knowledge about the 'interior' of a person, as contemporaries would have expressed the difficulty of knowing someone's innermost thoughts. The contemplative nun's task and purpose in life was to pray and to work towards spiritual perfection. Both these imperatives were governed by certain forms, but ultimately they were impossible to evaluate. The only judge of them could be God, and His judgement was reserved until after the life in question was over. Of course, this should not be understood to mean that the forms which such lives were supposed to take were not strict or clear - one only has to think of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius to find an attempt to classify and organise the path of a life towards salvation. Nevertheless, the contradiction between body and soul, between lived life and thought life remained, and the Inquisition scrutiny of the lives of the nuns in San José confronts this dilemma repeatedly.

The documents relating to Andrea de San Francisco's oral testimony consist of her answers to questions which are not themselves recorded. Andrea is a *criolla*, and forty nine years old. As she is responsible for bringing the Inquisition into the convent, it is crucial to reach an understanding of how she represents the situation in San José in order to realise what was initially at stake in the trial. Obviously, her position is not a strong one. The Inquisition took note of the charges she brought, but being in disagreement with her own convent superiors clearly cast doubt on the authority of any of her statements. A good nun is an obedient one, and Andrea de San Francisco is disobedient. Her behaviour and her declaration, however much they may be justified,

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[536] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f202r - 203r Letter Andrea de San Francisco 23 January 1661.

distance her from the figure of the exemplary nun to be found in the didactic texts and hagiographies of the period.[537] Perhaps the entire point is, however, that the exemplary nun could never be represented in the context of the Inquisition.

Not surprisingly, Andrea de San Francisco begins by trying to explain why she is in such an anomalous position in her convent. She tells how she was at first in agreement with the nuns who wanted to place the convent under the authority of the Carmelite fathers, believing that this was in order to bring it greater spiritual perfection, and that she even worked to persuade others. When she realised that the nuns were not behaving honestly however, she decided to oppose them.[538] Andrea de San Francisco's moment of realisation comes when she asks to read a letter the community has been given to sign by these nuns in order to further the cause. The letter, which employs some very wild rhetoric, is full of insults addressed to the secular clergy and contains scurrilous rumours about the Archbishop.

> *y lo que se decía en dichos párrafos era que cómo podrá gobernar almas de tanta perfección quien lasbia [sic] tan relajadamente, cómo podrá enseñar oración quien no la practica, cómo podrá enseñar abstinencia quien comía y bebía desordenadamente ...*[539]

These parts of the letter had been kept hidden from its signatories and it is only by insisting on seeing the complete text that Andrea discovers the ruse. In her testimony this will become Andrea's preferred mode of self representation: a willing and obedient nun who discovers, little by little, the machinations of a group of unscrupulous women in the convent. Her vivid description of the moment when the desires of these women becomes publicly obvious, when they refuse to obey their Archbishop in church, is a masterful instance of this self-representation. This striking scenario takes place on the occasion of Archbishop Burqueiro's first official Visit to San José. After having preached the same biblical story of obedience preached before him by Archbishops Manzo and Palafox, Burqueiro insists that the nuns come out of the cloister to greet

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537 Andrea de San Francisco defends her actions in going to the Inquisition by saying she was convinced to do so not only by other nuns in San José, but by her own confessors. She claims she pleaded with Jacinto de la Serna to wait until the Archbishop carried out a formal Visitation to the convent. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f118r Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.

538 AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f81v Andrea de San Francisco 4 February 1661.

539 [And what was said in those paragraphs was how can those whose souls are so spiritually relaxed hope to govern souls of such perfection and how could those who do not practice prayer teach it and how could those who eat and drink excessively teach abstinence?] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f82r Andrea de San Francisco 4 February 1661.

him. Margarita de San Bernardo and María de Sta. Inés dare to refuse his request, and at this point Andrea herself intervenes:

> *... y esta declarante les dijo, 'Madres, al prelado no se responde sino con la boca en tierra', y se postró esta declarante, y la madre fundadora llorando hizo lo mismo y pidiéndole perdón. Y de la comunidad unas se postraron y otras se quedaron tiesas, respondiéndole tanto que el dicho Don Simón Estevan les dijo, 'Madres, no es ese modo de tratar al prelado', y la dicha Sta. Inés le respondió, 'No es Vuestra Merced con quien hablamos', y el dicho Don Simón Estevan pidió al dicho Sr. Arzobispo que cesase la plática y usase de su benignidad, con que se acabó y cerraron la puerta y se fueron el dicho Sr. Arzobispo y quedó el convento dividido ...*[540]

The disunion in San José is clearly the greatest scandal in the eyes of the ecclesiastical authorities. A convent should not suffer from internal divisions. These divisions are rife in San José, and what Andrea de San Francisco's testimony does is place the responsibility for them very firmly on the *Hijas de la Orden*. This enables her to fit into the role of the hagiographic heroine or *reformadora*, who sees the evil in a convent and tries to remedy it. The moment when she recognises the evil intents of the *Hijas de la Orden* is represented in terms of a revelation. Andrea presents herself as the innocent who is disabused of her devout and pious conception of convent life by the behaviour of the *Hijas de la Orden*. She is the naive novice who thought she was about to enter a heaven when she professed, only to discover that the convent's internal constitution owed much more to the world than to Eden:

> *... que cuando esta declarante entró en este santo convento, que a los nueve de enero próximo pasado de este año de 661 hizo 27 años, entendiendo que venía al cielo, o por lo menos a donde seguramente había de alcanzar la salvación, hallólo en grande al [ ] ración [sic] y bandos*[541]

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[540] [And this witness said, 'Mothers, one only replies to the prelate with one's mouth on the ground', and this witness prostrated herself and the founding mother, in tears, did the same, asking for pardon and from among the community, some prostrated themselves and others remained still, answering {the prelate} back so insolently that said Dn. Simón Esteban said, 'Mothers, this is not the way to treat the prelate', and the said Mother Sta. Inés replied, 'we are not talking to Your Grace', and the said Dn. Simón Esteban asked the Archbishop to stop the audience and exercise his mercy with which it was ended and the door closed and the said Archbishop left, leaving the convent divided] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f108r Andrea de San Francisco 9 February 1661.

[541] [That when this witness entered this holy cloister, which on the next ninth of January of 1661 was 27 years ago, she thought she was entering heaven, or at least somewhere where she would attain salvation, she found it greatly divided into factions and groups] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f87v Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

The echoes of a paradise lost are maintained by the description of the ideal concordance between the original couple of founding mothers, the destruction of whose friendship brings disaster to the cloister:

> *porque la madre Mariana de la Encarnación [ ] fundadora de este convento, que habrá trece años que murió y la madre Inés de la Cruz, que fue la otra fundadora que murió el año de 633, y vinieron del convento de Jesús María de esta ciudad a fundar este convento movidas de Dios Nuestro Señor, se conservaron en suma paz y hermandad hasta que entraron estas madres gachupinas, que fueron la madre Bernarda de San Juan ya difunta, la madre María de Santa Inés su hermana, la madre Margarita de San Bernardo y la madre Ana de San Bartolomé, y pusieron discordia entre esas dos madres fundadoras*[542]

Paradoxically, the absolute loss of paradise, at least in hagiographic terms, resonates as much in Andrea's simple description of the evil nuns as *gachupinas* as in the behaviour she ascribes to these women. In Andrea's introduction of such brute 'naturalism' as the question of birthplace (in this colonial context indivisible from its concomitant cultural and political associations), the abandonment of the universal narrative of virtue characteristic of classic hagiography is confirmed.

An enormous variety of negative associations are connected by Andrea de San Francisco in her testimony to these *gachupina* interlopers. Bernarda de San Juan is *mujer muy entendida y capaz*, - a very learned and able woman - but she has also been brought up in the *compañía en el palacio de la Condesa de Montalbán* - the society of the palace of the Countess of Montalbán. On her sea voyage to New Spain she travels with some Carmelite fathers of whom she becomes very fond - *cobró grande afecto* - and as a result of this passion she and her sister, with the help of these

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542 [Because mother Mariana de la Encarnación, founder of this convent, who died thirteen years ago and mother Inés de la Cruz who was the other founder who died in 1633, they both came from the convent of Jesús María in this city to found this convent. And guided by God our Father they maintained great peace and sisterhood until these *gachupina* nuns entered the convent. These were Bernarda de San Juan, who is dead, María de Sta. Inés, her sister, and Margarita de San Bernardo and Ana de San Bartolomé, and they sowed discord between the two founding mothers] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f87v - 88r Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661. According to Andrea, how far San José finds itself from Paradise increases under the government of these *gachupinas* and is evident from the unhappiness in the cloister. Not only does one nun, Clara del Sacramento, want to hang herself, but most of the novices leave, terrorised by Margarita de San Bernardo. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f102r - 102v Andrea de San Francisco 9 February 1661. There is a chilling description, feeding nicely into anti-clerical commonplace, of how the latter abuses the novices: *... siendo su maestra de novicias la azotaba como a esclava y parece ser que era verdad porque se encerraba la dicha madre Margarita de San Bernardo con la dicha novicia en su celda, y se oían los azotes y también se salieron otras tres novicias por estas crueldades, tanto que se vió obligado el dicho Don Lope Altamirano a quitarla el oficio de maestra de novicias* [being mistress of novices, she would whip her like a slave and it seems this was true as the said Margarita de San Bernardo would lock herself in her cell with the said novice and the strokes were audible. Three other novices left because of these cruelties so that the said Dn. Lope Altamirano was obliged to remove her from the position of mistress of novices] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f102r Andrea de San Francisco 9 February 1661.

fathers, decide to profess in San José. At this point, there is no outright criticism of the *gachupina* nuns, but Andrea's narrative, read against a hagiographic model, provides enough elements for a negative interpretation. There is too much volition, will, knowingness and passion in these nuns; any reader sensitive to hagiographic standards of virtue and piety would have immediately been made aware that they were potentially wicked.[543] This becomes clear when they profess. Already, some kind of subterfuge is worked in order to waive their dowry requirements by giving them the two assisted places created by the patron Juan de Castillete. What ensues after their admission is not explained in any way by Andrea de San Francisco. She simply presents the facts; that suddenly, through an attraction based partially in recognition - *gachupinas* recognising their mutual origin - and partially in passion - one nun is attracted to another - the concordance and unity of the cloister is destroyed:

> *y la dicha madre Inés de la Cruz, como era gachupina y natural de Toledo, les cobró grande afición y la dicha madre Bernarda de San Juan, que como ha dicho tenía buenas partes naturales y atractiva, ganó de manera la voluntad de la dicha madre Inés de la Cruz*[544]

The resulting 'special friendship' and favouritism Inés de la Cruz shows Bernarda de San Juan means she appoints her Mistress of Novices, though Bernarda is only fourteen years old and has only just professed herself. Andrea de San Francisco mentions that even Inés de la Cruz's own brother, an Augustinian friar named Fray María Calollete is amazed by such behaviour - the family link serving to underline the fact that this behaviour was so unnatural that not even her own brother could sanction it.[545] Andrea's condemnation of this 'special friendship' is indebted to Sta. Teresa's own censure of them as the blight of convent unity.[546]

In Andrea de San Francisco's narrative, San José is depicted as riven into a network of interdependent alliances based on country of birth, family and affection. The interdependence of these bonds is exhibited continually in her testimony. An important

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[543] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f88r Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

[544] [And the said Inés de la Cruz, as she was a *gachupina* from Toledo felt great affinity for the said Bernarda de San Juan, the latter, as has been said had good natural qualities and was engaging and won the said Inés de la Cruz over totally] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f88r Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

[545] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f88v Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

[546] The horrible consequences which such close female friendships could be relied on to produce is evident in the anecdote Andrea tells of the Duchess of Albuquerque's comment to her *gachupina* best friends about the King. This Vicereign's support and advice for the cause of the *Hijas de la* Orden consists of the most vile and near treasonable gossip. She suggests the nuns make a gift to the King for, *el rey por*

part of her charge against the *Hijas de la Orden* is that they use the convent for mundane political purposes. That these purposes are also linked to family and nobiliary politics is so obvious that it is not presented as an independent accusation at all, but is implicit in the terms Andrea employs to describe who makes up the different factions in the convent. It also constitutes a *de facto* explanation for the reaction of such groups to various events. Thus, Andrea explains the ties holding together those responsible for the signing of certain letters through an extended genealogical description:

> *Y que la primera vez que se pidieron firmas para dichos informes, siendo priora la madre Inés de la Madre de Dios que ya es difunta y cuñada de la dicha madre Bernarda de San Juan, y María de Santa Inés por estar casado un hermano suyo llamado Francisco de Riofrío con Dña. Antonia de la Casa, hermana de las dos ya referidas ...* [547]

In Andrea's narration, the notes of an anti-clerical and misogynist sub-text are apparent - a startling consideration given her status. Nevertheless, in terms of narrative logic, in order to make her story hold, this is exactly the type of discourse Andrea has to use.[548] This is the classic hagiographic contradiction that has been noted before; where the examples meant to illustrate the model take on a life or interest of their own, which outweighs anything the abstract model itself could provide. A perfect instance of this is given during Andrea's criticism of Bernarda de San Juan, who becomes the *bête noire* of Andrea's testimony. For Andrea de San Francisco, the *gachupina* nun is a *mujer de poca obligación y de menos religión* - a woman of little honour and less religion.[549] At this point, the Inquisitors must have asked Andrea to elaborate on what she meant by honour. Her explanation is surprising. The cloister is completely forgotten here. The

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dineros vendería a sus hijos - the King would sell his children for money. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f108v Andrea de San Francisco 9 February 1661.

[547] [And the first time they asked for signatures for the said reports, being prioress Inés de la Madre de Dios who is now dead and who was the sister-in-law of the said Bernarda de San Juan and María de Sta. Inés, her brother Francisco de Riofrío being married to Dña. Antonia de la Casa, the sister of the two above mentioned] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f83r Andrea de San Francisco 4 February 1661. It is interesting in this context to see that these family and institutional links holding groups together in the convent may be criticised on a theoretical level by Andrea but that her testimony continually assumes their existence, even in her own personal case. Thus, she describes her method for getting messages out of the convent as follows - her sisters, who visit her in the cloister, take her messages to her brothers who have important positions and can influence events. When a play is staged in San José, Andrea is so scandalised she writes a note and hides it in a piece of marzipan which she then passes through the gate to her sister. The latter takes the message and passes it on to her brother, Alonso de Segura, who in turn passes it on to Alonso de Cuevas, an advisor of Burqueiro's. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f106r Andrea de San Francisco 9 February 1661.

[548] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f92r Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

[549] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f92r Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

measure of virtue and honour remains purely secular and totally marked by social status. Moreover, it is substantiated by personal experience and family ties:

> *Y que ha dicho que dicha madre de San Juan era de poca obligación porque su padre Pedro Bermudo o Bermudes, siendo obligado de la carnicería Gabriel [ ] de la Cruz, tuvo a su cargo en Tacuba la carnicería y casaba las vacas y lo mismo hizo su hijo Cristóbal de la Casa, que allí ganó dinero y su madre Doña Ana de Lima, que todos eran de España, vendía velas en Tacuba en una puerta de su casa. Y que lo supo por la comunicación que su padre de esta declarante, Francisco Fernández de Segura y toda la gente de su casa que vivían en una estancia de la jurisdicción de Tacuba, tenían con el hijo de Cristóbal de la Casa, con su madre y los esclavos de su padre de esta declarante iban a comprar carnes y velas.*[550]

Of course, a nun without honour is a contradiction in terms and in Andrea's testimony very rapidly, by force of logic, turns into a harlot. Thus, the words of María de Sta. Inés (the other leader of the *Hijas de la Orden)* about being able to sleep with a Carmelite friar in her bed without sin, though clearly scurrilous and unguarded for a nun, are reported in utmost seriousness by Andrea de San Francisco. She disregards their comic potential in favour of an interpretation which leaves no doubt about the murky nature of María de Sta. Inés's virtue. This interpretation is further upheld by a series of anecdotes all concerning María de Sta. Inés's supposed relationship with the vicar, Pedro Barrientos. Sexual innuendo was clearly a commonplace of anti-clerical literature in the period and something which all convents would have had to guard themselves against. There was a long tradition of platonic relationships between male admirers and nuns, but this kind of behaviour was strongly frowned upon.[551] It is thus strategically skilful, if utterly surprising, that such accusations be levied by one nun in order to discredit another. Andrea de San Francisco's gesturing at an illicit attachment between María de Sta. Inés and Barrientos is impeccably pragmatic, and she begins by saying that when asked about the relationship between the prioress and the vicar by a confessor, she stated it was nothing 'more' than a simple *devoción*. This clearly

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[550] [And she said that Bernarda de San Juan had little honour (lit. did not know her place) because her father, Pedro Bermudo or Bermúdez, though Gabriel de la Crúz had the charge of the butcher's shop in Tacuba, took it upon himself and he used to catch the cows. His son, Cristobal de la Casa did the same and made his fortune as well as the mother, Dña. Ana de Lima. They were all from Spain and they sold candles in Tacuba from the door of their house and she knew this because of talking to her father, Francisco Fernández de Segura. His entire household, who lived in a one-roomed building in the district of Tacuba had relations with the son of Cristobal de la Casa and with his mother. And the slaves belonging to this witness' father used to go there to buy meat and candles.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f92r - 92v Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661

[551] Cf. Vigil (1986)238-249 on *devotos* and the courtly love tradition in convents.

constitutes an instance of the disingenuous as totally damning.[552] Andrea then launches into an account of how she saved the convent's honour by covering up for the incredibly indiscreet behaviour of Barrientos and María de Sta. Inés. She describes the pair as going off together alone to a sanctuary in the convent's garden, the most isolated part of the cloister. She tries to accompany them (for the good of their reputations, it is understood) but is dismissed. Nevertheless, she remains in the vicinity. Perhaps the most incriminating detail is her claim that the pair use another nun, María de la Encarnación, as a look-out, posting her at the door of the sanctuary to warn them should anyone approach.[553]

Andrea de San Francisco's testimony also goes into detail about how the collusion between Barrientos and María de Sta. Inés not only has sexual overtones, but also consists of financial dealings which threaten the economy of the convent. Basically, she insinuates that Barrientos is using San José as a safehouse where he is able to ply the Vicereign with favours so as to obtain the archbishopric of the city for himself. Andrea gives a detailed and rather sensational description of the kinds of goods that passed through the convent, things which are clearly quite unlike those which one would normally expect to find inside a strict Discalced Carmelite cloister:

> *... le envía Don Pedro de Barrientos, por mano de la dicha Madre de Sta. Inés, en unas [ ] una [ ] de diamantes e interno de diamantes que son collar y manillas. [...] cajón de chocolate de Oaxaca que puestas la veces, que era muy ordinario el venir la duquesa a este convento [...] enviaba el dicho Don Pedro de Barrientos las comidas y el chocolate con grande ostentación.*[554]

This courting by the Vicar of the Vicereign means, according to Andrea de San Francisco, that there had been more than seventy visits by the Vicereign to San José in the space of a year, and that twenty five of those were state visits - which implied that

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552 *Que juzgaba que no habría aquello llegado a más que las devociones que en otros conventos se tienen* [she thought that it had not gone any further than the devotions usual in other convents] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f103r Andrea de San Francisco 9 February 1661.

553 AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f104r Andrea de San Francisco 9 February 1661. Gardens and small sanctuaries for private prayer were a distinctive feature of Carmelite convents and were modelled on Sta. Teresa's design of the convent of San José in Avila. Cf. José Miguel Muñoz Jimenez, 'Los conventos de Carmelitas Descalzas en el Barroco Sudamericano' in *Ier Congreso internacional del monacado femenino en España, Portugal y América: 1492-1992* (León: Universidad de León, 1993)37-56.

554 [Pedro de Barrientos sends via the said sister de Sta. Inés some { } a { } of diamonds and inside diamonds in the shape of a necklace and bracelets {...} a box of chocolate from Oaxaca and as it was very usual for the Duchess to come to this convent { } God willing, the said Pedro de Barrientos would send dinners and chocolate with great ostentation] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f86v Andrea de San Francisco 4 February 1661.

they were celebrated with great pomp and at considerable expense to the convent.[555] The most spectacular instance in Andrea's testimony of the court recreating itself in the convent comes when she tells of how Barrientos organised the staging of a courtly comedy in San José especially for the Vicereign. The play is staged in the church itself (not inside the cloister) and is acted by Barrientos's servants. Nevertheless, this is precisely the kind of activity the Carmelites as an order were famous for abjuring.[556]

The parity in evil and sinfulness between sex and money is made apparent from the above descriptions given by Andrea. In the context of the convent, their horror is all-embracing for they threaten two of the nuns' three solemn vows; chastity and poverty. The machinations, financial and political, in which the *gachupina* nuns implicate themselves in order to advance their cause completes the unholy picture, constituting an offence against the third solemn vow of obedience. The *Hijas de la Orden* begin a concerted attempt to convince the male branch of the order to take San José under its tutelage, and part of their lobbying involves mismanaging convent funds and applying them to purposes they were never intended for. The types of goods the nuns begin to trade in are extraordinary. Clearly an economy of a kind existed, whereby the nuns exchanged goods produced or owned by the convent for cash, which was then used in their cause. It is not clear whether all the goods would have been exchanged for money - some clearly remained as they were, and travelled out of the convent in the form of 'gifts'. They included *rosarios, tomates, chocolate, sahumerios y olores* - rosaries, tomatoes, chocolate, incense and other herbs for burning. The kind of circumstantial detail Andrea is asked to provide is striking, and suggests that her narration is anchored in some measure of reality. Thus, although she cannot give precise numbers, she specifies under questioning the kind of containers used to transport the goods - a detail which would have made the quantities being dealt in very apparent to the Inquisitors.[557]

The removal of Andrea's testimony from any hagiographic model is brought home intensely by a series of descriptions she gives in answer to questions about what

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[555] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f104v Andrea de San Francisco 9 February 1661.

[556] See Lavrin (1965) on the religious scandals in the eighteenth century in Mexican convents. What is surprising is how quickly the Carmelite foundation was corrupted and used to serve these courtly political aims.) On plays in the cloister see Vigil (1986)250-261 and Armando de María y Campos, *Guía de representaciones teatrales en la Nueva España (siglos XVI al XVIII)* (México: B. Costa Amici, 1959). Also, José Rojas Garcidueñas, *El teatro de la Nueva España en el siglo XVI* (México: Alvarez, 1935).

happened to the goods she claims were amassed in the convent after the General of the Carmelite male branch had refused to endorse the cause of the *gachupinas*. The withdrawal of the Carmelite fathers' support came as a terrible blow to the *gachupinas*. Bernarda de San Juan, one of their leaders, was so overwhelmed by the news that she had an apoplectic fit, from which she died. Andrea describes how Bernarda's body lies in the infirmary awaiting the last unction, which the Carmelite fathers fail to come to administer. They only finally appear in San José in order to organise the removal of all the illicit goods stored in the convent. The account of this enterprise is notable for its attempt to identify and provide detail. Its rhetoric is clearly intended to qualify it as the basis from which a formal accusation might emerge:

> *se sacaron aquella noche de este convento envoltorios y cajitas de la celda de la dicha madre de Sta. Inés, a titulo de contadora, y cargaban dichos envoltorios y cajitas las madres Margarita de San Bernardo y Mariana de la Encarnación que era muy suya y actual entonces tornera y Bernarda de la Concepción. Y quien recibía dichos envoltorios y cajitas eran el mulato Blas, y luego dijo que aún no era sacristán el dicho mulato Blas, sino un Indio de mucha razón llamado Miguel, que andaba vestido a lo Español, que es ya difunto. Y un negro a lo que le parezca a esta declarante llamado Gaspar, esclavo de Cristóbal de la Casa, adonde se llevaban las cosas referidas. Y sabe que eran los susodichos los que lo recibían y llevaban a casa del dicho Cristóbal de la Casa, porque estaban los dichos Indio Miguel y negro Gaspar en el torno de la parte de fuera y cuando les entregaban las cosas referidas decian, 'toma, Miguel. Toma, Gaspar, lleva esto a casa de Cristóbal de la Casa', y que aunque no sabe esta declarante que con efecto se llevasen cosa alguna al convento de Carmelitas descalzos ...*[558]

Andrea's account of the financial intrigues in the convent is completed by a story which shows once more the distance that exists between this kind of narration and traditional hagiography. She describes how the founding mother, Mariana de la Encarnación, had inherited some jewels from a female relative which she did not declare to the convent. This in itself was a censurable action, given the nuns' vow of

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[557] Andrea describes how the articles are placed in the kinds of chests more usually used to bring soap from Puebla, a provincial town. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f95v Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

[558] [That night they removed from the convent packages and small boxes from mother Sta. Inés's cell, in the name of the treasurer, and the said packages and little boxes were carried by Margarita de San Bernardo and Mariana de la Encarnación who was very thick with her, and the door-keeper at that time, Bernarda de la Concepción. The person who received the packages and boxes was the *mulato* Blas. Then she said that Blas was not yet a sacristan but that it was a clever Indian called Miguel who used to dress as a Spaniard and is now dead. There was also a black man called, this witness thinks, Gaspar, who was the slave of Cristobal de la Casa, to whom the things were being taken. And she knows that the people mentioned above received the goods and were taking them to Cristobal de la Casa's house because the said Indian Miguel and the black man Gaspar were at the gate, on the outside, and when the things were handed to them they said, 'here Miguel' and, 'here Gaspar, take this to the house of Cristobal de la Casa'. This witness does not know for certain that anything was taken to the convent of the male Carmelites] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f96r Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

poverty. The *gachupina* nuns seize on this, and Bernarda de San Juan, as prioress, obliges Mariana to declare them. The jewels are subsequently used to decorate an image in the choir. At some point, they disappear again, (Andrea's implication is that they are used to further the *gachupina*'s cause) but when she complains to one of the Carmelite confessors, he uses the fact that Mariana de la Encarnación had not declared them in the first place in order to present their disappearance and use in the *gachupinas*' cause in a wholly favourable light. The jewels, he says, will be used for the good of the order, rather than for family interests, as Mariana de la Encarnación no doubt intended by hiding their existence.[559] In fact, the justification given for all the financial dealings of the *gachupinas* is this: that they want property and goods solely for the good of the order. In no way does their behaviour violate the vow of poverty since nothing is to be used for their personal gain.[560]

Once again, the closeness with which the sins of sex and lucre are connected in Andrea's testimony is apparent from the way in which she associates the financial dealings of the Carmelite fathers who favour of the cause with their frequent visits and presence in the convent. Thus, in Andrea's testimony, María de Sta. Inés's government is marked by the intense and continuous presence of Carmelite fathers in San José. She says there are always two or three at the gate, more usually six, and that as a consequence the nuns are not fulfilling their obligations of prayer and worship. They are not obeying the rule, but instead idling their time away with these friars in a manner described in such exaggerated terms as to seem a parody of anti-clerical commonplaces. Thus, the visiting room is a place,

> *... donde habia risas y entretenimientos y cuentecillos ridículos con que los frailes se entretenían con las religiosas*[561]

Andrea goes on to refer to Carmelite authorities who warn about the dangers of convents placing themselves under the obedience of the male branch. In a startling piece of reasoning, she asserts that such a close relationship between male and

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[559] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f98r Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

[560] Cf. the Carmelite confessor's words to Andrea de San Francisco; *eran grandes religiosas e hijas de la orden, que para eso querían todo lo cuanto tenían* [they were virtuous nuns and daughters of the order and it was for the order that they wanted everything they had] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f97v Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

[561] [Where there was laughter and entertainments and ridiculous stories with which the monks passed the time with the nuns] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f99v Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

female branches of the order leads to the relaxation of spiritual discipline, the rule becoming a way of sheltering a multitude of sins:

> *... porque los padres no sólo en el trato y comunicación, no se ajustaban a las reglas de su instituto, que son estrechas, mas antes servía de capa para algunos quebrantamientos en cosas graves, como era guardarles dineros ...*[562]

Andrea makes it clear that too much contact has brought the Carmelites, male and female, a dangerous degree of spiritual relaxation. She describes how the Carmelite friars continue to visit the convent regularly, disregarding Archbishop Burqueiro's orders, and despite the fact that San José's door is on the same street as his residence and that he therefore cannot avoid but note their comings and goings. Moreover, once inside the convent they insult the Archbishop in their conversations, referring disrespectfully to his place of birth. On the feast days of the order, these dubious kinds of activity intensify and the nuns dedicate themselves, to the detriment of religious observance, to the preparation of feasts for the Carmelite friars, who come to collect the food at all hours of the day and night:

> *... y que en días de pascua de San Juan y santos de la orden, a la una y a las dos de la noche, se tocaba la campanilla de la portería y eran los criados de los padres del Carmen que venían por los almuerzos y meriendas de los padres*[563]

On this occasion, the extent of the relaxation of mores is emphasised by the fact that even the *mulato* sacristan, Blas, dares to show disrespect for the Archbishop. He does this in a dramatic way, telling scandalous stories openly in the church, on the feast of Corpus Christi, about the Archbishop's legendary miserliness (a quality associated to his provenance from Galicia in Spain).

> *... estando el Santísimo Sacramento descubierto, y mucha gente en la iglesia de este convento, dijo en voz alta el dicho mulato que no había a[ ] hombre más vil a las Indias que el arzobispo, y que había faltado el día antes la guardaparde [sic] de la mula de su crucero y que había mandado que la pagasen los cocheros*[564]

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562 [Because not only did these friars in their communication and dealings with the nuns disrespect the rules of their order, which are strict, but it was used as a veil for various lapses in serious matters, such as (the nuns) keeping moneys for them] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f100r Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

563 [And on the feast days of St. John and of other saints of the order, at one and two at night the bell would ring in the lodge and it would be the servants of the Carmelite friars who came for the lunches and snacks that had been prepared for the friars] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f113r Andrea de San Francisco 10 February 1661.

564 [The Holy Sacrament being uncovered and many people in this convent's church, the said *mulato* said out loud that there was not a more churlish man in the Indies than the Archbishop and that the day before he had found the harness of his mule to be missing and he had ordered that his coachmen pay for it] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f113vr Andrea de San Francisco 10 February 1661. Blas also goes on to say that the

Blas's behaviour would seem to be the pinnacle of disrespect for a prelate, the acts of a *mulato* servant being allowed to cast into shame the good name of San José.

In other parts of her testimony Andrea de San Francisco provides information as to how the cloister has not only been metaphorically challenged by activities like those of Blas, but has also been materially changed. The sense of adventure and sexual *pecadillo* connoted by many of these changes is not fortuitous, for they reflect and confirm the general relaxation of mores and the breaches of the cloister Andrea has described already. Thus, a special little gate had been made for the Marquise of Cadereita to communicate with the nuns and this is sealed up when discovered by Diego Guerra, on taking up his position as vicar of San José.[565] Andrea de San Francisco also says that when the courtly comedy was being planned, it was suggested by a Carmelite friar, Juan de San José, that the bars in the lower choir could be removed for the occasion. But even Pedro de Barrientos, the orchestrator of the event, thought this excessive and would not authorise it.[566]

The moment when the rest of the convent community refuses to endure this kind of behaviour any longer is recounted in very revealing language by Andrea. They finally rebel when a *gachupina* take-over of the convent seems imminent. Andrea describes these nuns as feeling an emotion redolent of original sin - envy. They seek the other founding mother, Mariana de la Encarnación, in order to redress their wrongs. At this point, the unity of the convent breaks up definitively. Mariana de la Encarnación, having failed to reason with Inés de la Cruz, goes outside the cloister and appeals to the Archbishop to remove the young *gachupina* as Mistress of Novices.[567]

It is significant that the *Clérigas monigotas,* who come into their name and their voice through their rebellion, should have their liberation described precisely as an entry into language, and thus consequently the world. This is an entrance that is at the same time a step out of the ideal cloister into the political one. Andrea says that they had lived like inarticulate beasts in their obedience to the founding mothers:

Archbishop eats rarely at home, *de puro miserable* [out of pure miserliness] and that he prefers being invited out.

[565] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f109v - 110r Andrea de San Francisco 10 February 1661.

[566] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f110r Andrea de San Francisco 10 February 1661.

[567] Andrea describes the latter as already having used her position as teacher to divide the convent by favouring the *gachupina* novice Ana de San Bartolomé over Teresa de Jesús who was born in Querétaro, New Spain. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f88v Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

... habían vivido como unas bestias sin discurso, sujetas a la obediencia.[568]

It becomes apparent very quickly that Andrea is attempting to press a political argument through her testimony. She is arguing that the divisions in the convent are not the fruit of a profound religious breach, but rather of mundane, but equally disastrous, worldly politics. In Andrea's opinion, the extent to which the desire to place San José under the obedience of the Carmelite male branch is only an expedient justification for other political aims is made apparent when the *gachupina* nuns betray Beatríz de Jesús. This nun had written requesting a Carmelite confessor, so the support of the *Hijas de la Orden* would have seemed a surety. Instead, they denounce Beatríz because, according to Andrea, she is *criolla - natural de esta ciudad* - a creole, born in this city. Andrea's comment is apposite:

> *... y que es de notar la astucia de dichas madres gachupinas, que dieron cuenta a dicho Sr. Arzobispo de este papel escrito a carmelita descalzo para derribar a la dicha madre priora, como la derribaron*[569]

The cunning of the *gachupina* nuns and their supporters is also evident from their rewriting of the chronicle of San José and the history of the Carmelite order in New Spain. In the revisionist version, a manuscript written by Antonio de la Madre de Dios, before her profession, Bernarda de San Juan is told that San José is not subject to the obedience of the order but that of the secular Prelate. This is described as disappointing her and she, in the manner of reforming saintly heroines, promises to remedy the situation once she is in a position of authority. Andrea de San Francisco's account is acutely aware of the power of this kind of historical revision and writing, pointing out that this revisionist version is used in the convent as spiritual reading at recreation.[570] Not only do the *Hijas de la Orden* invent apocryphal stories to suit their purpose however, they also misinterpret the writings of Sta. Teresa. Andrea de San Francisco is very sure about her own 'reading' of the Holy Mother, and declares that an early version of Sta. Teresa's *Visitas* has been removed from San José because it is

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[568] [They had lived like beasts without the use of speech, subjecting themselves completely in obedience] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f88v Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

[569] [And the duplicity of the said *gachupina* nuns is noteworthy, for they informed the Archbishop of this letter written to a Carmelite father in order to topple the said prioress and topple her they did] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f91v Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

[570] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f91v Andrea de San Francisco 7 February 1661.

clear in this version of the text that the saint subjected herself and her first convents willingly to the authority of the secular clergy.

Andrea's description of how the *Hijas de la Orden* work to impose a kind of history where only their point of view is represented, forms part of her accusation that they are perverting the truth. Apart from rewriting the foundation chronicles, they also try to change the saintly devotions in the convent. This involves both changing the affections the nuns feel for a particular saint as well as physically transforming images of saints in the convent. Thus, San Nicolás de Tolentino is replaced in the affections of the servant nuns by San Anastasio, a Carmelite servant friar for whom the *gachupina* nuns lay on a feast and celebration.[571] Similarly, pictures which featured friars in Franciscan habits are painted over with the habit of St. Elias. Other pictures of Holy Fathers, dressed as Carmelites, are also commissioned.[572]

Significantly, it is in relation to this rewriting of history that Andrea finally makes something approaching a doctrinal accusation against the *Hijas de la Orden*. Andrea describes how these nuns tell the story of a Carmelite convent in Spain which manages to survive not taking communion except from the male Carmelites, though this means they only take it, and make the confession it requires, once every six months. Apparently, the Carmelite friars explain that it is possible to remain so long without full confession because a mental confession is enough to pardon the sins and failings of a year. This claim is a direct challenge to the authority of the Church and, not surprisingly, Andrea says she told her confessor Jacinto de la Serna immediately about this 'doctrine', as she herself terms it.[573] At this point, Andrea is asked to give detailed information - to provide the names of those present at the recreation when the story was told, to explain what form recreation took exactly in San José, to describe what she means precisely by 'doctrine'.[574] In this particular case, she seems simply to mean 'teaching' by it. Andrea says that the *gachupina* nuns do not understand the 'doctrine' of Sta. Teresa on obedience; that they interpret this as only applying when they are subject to the rule of the order:

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[571] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f116v Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.
[572] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f117r - 117v Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.
[573] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f114r Andrea de San Francisco 10 February 1661.
[574] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f114v - 115v Andrea de San Francisco 10 February 1661.

> *... no se entienden con ellos la doctrina de su Sta. Madre, particularmente en lo que habla de la obediencia, que aquello es para las que están sujetas a la orden*[575]

Significantly, Andrea de San Francisco emphasises that these nuns do not only say this, they 'practice' it. Clearly, this is the damning combination as far as 'doctrine' is concerned. The conjunction of theory and practice not only confirms that the misguided nuns are mistaken, it also conveniently provides the material evidence through which Andrea can unmask them and they can be condemned:

> *... y esta declarante no una sino muchas veces se lo ha oído decir y practicar a las referidas religiosas en particulares conversaciones en recreaciones y se lo ha oído decir y practicar.*[576]

This is the sole moment in her testimony when Andrea discusses doctrinal issues. The greater part of her accusation is given over to arguing that the wickedness of the *Hijas de la Orden* is not connected to any strongly held ideal or doctrine, but is in fact gratuitous malevolence. Thus, she describes how María de Sta. Inés, the chief *gachupina*, uses the convent to pursue political aims which are never entirely clear or logical. At one point, the convent is used to shelter a noble, Martín de Ribera, who has fallen out with the Viceroy Albuquerque and with Barrientos. Given that both Barrientos and the Viceroy have been supporters of María de Sta. Inés's cause, this behaviour would seem to be both duplicitous and dangerous. The only reason Martín de Ribera seems to be favoured in this way is his friendship with a Discalced Carmelite friar, Francisco de los Reyes, who is in turn a friend of María de Sta. Inés. Andrea de San Francisco's account of her discovery that Ribera is being sheltered and of the ways in which the whole venture is carried out clandestinely within the cloister reveals some interesting details about convent life - how fragmented it is and yet how difficult to maintain anything secret within its walls. The convent is used by servants who walk around inside the cloister and who bring and take food and move people to and from different locations. At one point Andrea mentions the dramatic detail of Ribera disguising himself as a friar, and compounds her assertion of María de Sta. Inés's

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575 [The doctrine of the Holy Mother does not apply to them {the secular clergy}particularly about obedience, which only applies to those subject to the order] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f115v Andrea de San Francisco 10 February 1661.

576 [And this witness has heard and seen it practised not once but many times by the said nuns in specific conversations and recreations and she has heard it and seen it practised] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f115v Andrea de San Francisco 10 February 1661.

duplicity with the account of how María not only does not tell Pedro Barrientos about what she is doing but she in fact uses the Vicereign to send documents to Spain which will help Ribera in his argument with the Viceroy. This she accomplishes by including them in a box she gives the Vicereign, pretending they are business matters concerning the convent.[577]

This powerful story however, gives rise to a moment of discomfort in Andrea's usually sanguine narrative style. How does she know what she describes? Andrea is quick to introduce an explanation; she was going to the kitchen for some water with another nun when,

> *... ambas dos vieron pasar dos hombres seglares de capa y espada que distintamente conocieron ser el dicho Don Martín de Ribera y Alonso de Cabello su criado, en compañía de la dicha María Santa Inés y Margarita de San Bernardo y Bernarda de la Concepción. Y los llevaron a la portería donde cenaron y de allí por la sacristía, cuya puerta cae en el zaguán de esa portería, los llevó Blas, el mulato sacristán, a la iglesia y los metió en la capilla de bonillas [sic] donde estuvieron tres días encerrados, llevándoles la comida y demás necesidades el dicho mulato. Y de la capilla los llevaron al altar menor por orden de la madre Sta. Inés, y en traje de clérigo fue el dicho Don Martín de Ribera y lo vió esta declarante y toda la comunidad, porque estuvieron los dos susodichos hablando con las religiosas en el coro bajo, y aún le guardó la dicha María Santa Inés al dicho Don Martín de Ribera sus papeles y otras cosas dentro de este convento*[578]

Clearly, however, the discomfort of this illicit knowledge remains. The two narrative imperatives, the denunciatory for the purposes of the Inquisition, and that of *docta ignorantia*, so necessary for the construction of a saintly persona, are shown to be in contradiction.

There are a number of these moments in Andrea's testimony and one of the most interesting concerns honour and its various interpretations as family lineage and as virtue. In strict hagiographic terms, the nobility of a religious person is immaterial, their lived virtue being all important. In practice, even in hagiography, it is usual to make

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[577] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f111v Andrea de San Francisco 10 February 1661.

[578] [Both of them saw two men dressed in cloaks and wearing swords and whom they recognised as being Martín de Ribera and his servant Alonso de Cabello. They were accompanied by the said María de Sta. Inés and Margarita de San Bernardo and by Bernarda de la Concepción, and they took them to the lodge where they ate and then to the sacristy. The door of the sacristy opens onto the ditch outside the lodge and through this door the *mulato* sacristan Blas the took them to the church and put them in the Chapel where they remained locked in for three days. The said *mulato* took them food and every other thing they needed and from the chapel they took them to the small altar on the orders of María de Sta. Inés and the said Dn. Martín Ribera was dressed as a friar and this witness and the whole community saw them because they stayed talking with the nuns in the lower choir and the said María de Sta. Inés even kept some of the said Dn. Martín de Ribera's papers and other things in the convent for him] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f111r Andrea de San Francisco 10 February 1661.

noble behaviour consonant with noble birth. Hence the stigma, religious and social, attached to illegitimacy. This stigma would have been even more marked in the cloister, a place where illegitimate daughters were often deposited. Unsurprisingly, any suspicion of illegitimacy meant marginalisation for the person implicated. Andrea de San Francisco describes how the founding mother is made to believe that one of the candidates for prioress, Margarita de San Bernardo, is illegitimate. Immediately, the founding mother campaigns against the illegitimate nun's candidacy, prompting Andrea to reveal that this is in fact not true of Margarita de San Bernardo, but that it is true of Catalina de Christo and of Ana de San Bartolomé, other *gachupinas* in San José, and that such a rumour is being spread precisely to confuse the founding mother and allow Margarita de San Bernardo to be elected. Andrea's suspicion is confirmed. Mariana de la Encarnación, the founding mother, makes embarrassing declarations about the illegitimacy of Margarita de San Bernardo;

> *... la dicha madre fundadora haciendo grandes extremos sobre que no era a propósito la dicha madre Margarita de San Bernardo por su mucha condición, y que nunca la habían hecho ni aún definidora en el convento porque era pepenadas [sic], que es lo mismo que expósita, y no se sabía quiénes eran sus padres y así está puesto en los libros de las entradas de las religiosas en este convento*[579]

This type of declaration casts the founding mother in a less than holy light, and as a result works in the aggrieved nun's favour. In this narrative, illegitimacy is both clearly exploited for the value it has in traditional hagiographic terms, while its value is also acknowledged to lie in its social and political resonance. Thus, it is used to awaken reflexes of social prejudice in the founding mother. At no point is this social interpretation of bastardy challenged, rather it is confirmed by Andrea de San Francisco's denunciation of other nuns as illegitimate. It is not wrong to declare a nun illegitimate and attempt to bar her from office, what is wrong is to level this charge at an innocent nun.

The smoothness with which Andrea de San Francisco presents her testimony breaks up only when she tries to explain how she has acquired the knowledge about such incidents. It is indeed difficult to explain this without compromising her position of

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[579] [The said founding mother complaining vociferously that it was not fitting that Margarita de San Bernardo, because of her condition {be elected} and that they had never made her even treasurer because she was a nobody, which is the same as illegitimate and no one knew who her parents were and it was thus written down in the book of entries of this convent] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f101v Andrea de San Francisco 9 February 1661.

absolute innocence - a position more easily supported through ignorance than knowledge of any such affairs. It is, of course, legitimate for Andrea to have certain kinds of knowledge about the activities of the *Hijas de la Orden* - for example financial information - which she would have had access to in her ten years as treasurer of the convent. She is thus able to declare that she knows certain convent donations given to the dowry fund for poor novices have been misspent, along with other funds assigned originally to ecclesiastical posts in the convent and which have been deliberately left vacant.[580] At one point however, her desire to accuse leads her into a story of scant reliability which seems an elaborate excuse for her reading of a correspondence which did not concern her. She explains that she gained much of her evidence concerning the activities of the *Hijas de la Orden* in Spain and Rome through reading letters which were given to her for making *papier mâché* with which to repair reliquaries. She describes rescuing the letters from the paste, after accidentally beginning to read one and discovering them all still to be legible.[581] Once again, I would argue that this moment of excessively wrought narration denotes not only a need to provide material evidence (however bizarrely justified) on Andrea's part, but also a real unease about her stature as a witness, and consequently about the power of her words to convey authority and truth.

The *Clérigas monigotas* and the Inquisition's Set Questions: the Refusal of Heresy

The group of nuns who support Andrea de San Francisco is also interrogated. In the analysis that follows it is apparent how much these testimonies are indebted to Andrea's own account, and how they share similar problems of guaranteeing authority. The strategy of response displayed by the *clérigas monigotas* is remarkably uniform. These nuns describe the situation in the convent in the very concrete terms provided by Andrea de San Francisco - San José is split into rival *gachupín* and *criollo* factions. What emerges from each individual testimony is a series of cultural associations which these terms conjure for the nuns. The universal virtues and vices characteristic of hagiographic narrative collapse in these accounts into very specific qualities and sins.

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[580] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f85v Andrea de San Francisco 4 February 1661.
[581] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f85r Andrea de San Francisco 4 February 1661.

The relation of these testimonies to hagiographic narrative is a complex one however. Although the nuns draw away from hagiographic norms in their description of the politics of the convent, when confronted with direct questions relating to religious orthodoxy, they avoid the logical conclusions of their previous evidence, precisely by invoking the most frequent of hagiographic *topoi* - *docta ignorancia*. Nevertheless, the forensic rhetoric of their evidence permits a degree of 'self-fashioning' far greater than that of the classical *vida*. In what follows, I will attempt to show how the evidence of the *clérigas monigotas* is shaped by these varied rhetorical tools and how the nuns manoeuvre them, both as individuals and as a group.

The letter which the *Clérigas monigotas* send in support of their cause to the King relies principally on an historical argument in which, contrary to the interpretation of the *Hijas de la Orden*, all Carmelite convents have always been ruled by secular clergy rather than by the male branch of the order. The entire tone of this letter is very matter of fact - alluding to other convents in New Spain which wished to change from the rule of their own order to that of the secular clergy - as well as outlining the general problems to be encountered when the two great colonial institutional powers locked themselves in conflict. Throughout, the specificity of the New Spanish situation is foregrounded very deliberately, and by pointing out the histories of specific convents the nuns seem to indicate that this kind of institutional wrangle is particularly difficult in the New World context:

> *... discordias entre las dos enbesas [sic] eclesiásticas y seglar, queriendo entrometerse los tales y amparar las, que con atrevida osadía se oponen a los prelados, y otras graves inconvenientes que en estos remotos reinos padece la iglesia ...*[582]

This uncompromising approach to the situation means that the letter also rapidly dismisses the justification the *Hijas de la Orden* present for their behaviour, that through the correct observance of the rule they hope to achieve greater spiritual perfection, as a foil masking a series of political and family interests:

> *algunas religiosas, que favorecidas de personas poderosas seculares poco afectas al prelado y de religiosos del mismo instituto e interesados, han querido*

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[582] [Discord between the two powers, religious and secular, the latter wanting to interfere and protect those who oppose the prelate with impudent daring, as well as other inconveniences which the church suffers from in these remote kingdoms] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f 129r Letter *Hijas del Ordinario* 24 May 1660.

negar la obediencia a su legítimo prelado y darla a los religiosos carmelitas a título de más perfección ...[583]

In her testimony, Clara del SS. Sacramento gives an account of the behaviour of the *Hijas de la Orden* and of events in the convent which is very similar to Andrea de San Francisco's own. The most significant similarity is perhaps the use of the term *gachupina* rather than that of *Hijas de la Orden* to describe the nuns who are hostile to the prelate. In Clara's testimony, the Spanish nuns are more talkative, more communicative and more connected to the world than the other nuns. The train of reasoning seems to be that that this connection to the world is associated with speculation and is therefore a sign of too much thought; an extremely inappropriate activity for any pious nun. Clara ties her reasoning in naturally with the worries about heterodoxy implicit in the Inquisition's question:

> *... la Sevillana, que es Margarita de San Bernardo y la que es de la Puebla de Montalbán, que es María de Sta. Inés, son tan ladinas que esta declarante ha dicho en tiempos pasados que tiene don de lenguas, según son las entradas y salidas y correspondencias que tienen y han tenido; así con toda esta provincia de frailes carmelitas como con otras personas aquí, en España, en Roma y en todo el mundo. Y el Doctor Gamb [ ] prebendado de esta santa iglesia, que es capellán y confesor de este convento, llamaba a la dicha Margarita de San Bernardo 'la metafísica'. Y el padre fray Juan del Espíritu Santo, Carmelita descalzo la decía [ ] confesante o declarante, que la dicha madre María Sta. Inés era muy especulativa y que no era menester tanta especulación para Carmelitas*[584]

She goes on to describe how the *gachupina* nuns have a privileged relationship with the *gachupina* Vicereign, the Duchess de Albuquerque, and how this kind of collusion by virtue of birthplace is necessarily pernicious in a convent. The Vicereign, when she enters the cloister, goes immediately to visit her friends the *gachupina* nuns, instead of obeying protocol and first greeting the Prioress, who happens to be Clara

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583 [Some nuns, having the favour of powerful lay persons who dislike the prelate, and of monks of the same order who are not disinterested, have wanted to refuse obedience to their legitimate prelate and give it instead to the Carmelite monks, arguing they do so in order to be more perfect] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f 128v Letter *Hijas del Ordinario* 24 May 1660.

584 [And the woman from Seville, Margarita de San Bernardo, and María de Sta. Inés who is from Puebla de Montalbán are so loquacious that this witness has said in the past that they have the gift of tongues, especially given the comings and goings and the correspondence they have and have had with all the Carmelite friars of this Province as well as with people in Spain and Rome and throughout the world. And Dr. Gam( ) priest of this church who is chaplain and confessor in this convent used to call the said Margarita de San Bernardo 'the metaphysical one' and father Juan del Espíritu Santo, a Discalced Carmelite, used to say to this witness that the said María de Sta. Inés was too speculative and there was no need for so much speculation for Carmelites] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f163v - 164r Clara del SS. Sacramento 18 February 1661. *Ladino* could also signify 'half-caste' or an Indian who spoke Spanish.

herself. Clearly, the lay and not the convent hierarchy is being observed in this instance. Although Clara is at pains to point out that her accusations are not about a personal sense of offence, but rather a complaint about the disrespect for convent hierarchy, her account takes on life from this kind of personal detail, lifting it out of the spiritually abstract and placing it within a resolutely historical and subjective narrative. In this case, the details build up to provide an almost parodic picture of feminine vanity and lack of seriousness. Not only does the Vicereign disrespect the niceties of convent protocol, she insults the Archbishop calling him a *monjecillo* [little friar] and her maid, Francisca, is allowed to participate in what turns into a generalised and violent vituperation of all clerics, extending to criticism of their mores in impenetrable, but clearly 'down to earth' language:

> *... que se van a sus casas a comer gallinas, que no saben qué es religión*[585]

Clara del SS. Sacramento is interrogated on the following day also, and in her second testimony she continues her account of the all too human and worldly manner in which the *gachupinas* have proceeded in their cause. She makes clear that all previous attempts to put the convent under the rule of the Carmelite fathers were extremely discrete and carried out with all due respect for the secular clergy. Moreover, the Carmelite friars themselves behaved impeccably, whereas now she describes them as visiting the convent at all hours and publicising the cause all over the city. In this, her descriptions are reminiscent of Andrea de San Francisco's testimony. Perhaps the ultimate horror of the public property that San José has become is contained in Clara del SS. Sacramento's account of how the *gachupinas* use of unruly language about the Archbishop is picked up by the city children who sing songs in the streets about the insolence of the nuns:

> *... ni había réplicas ni valentía, como ahora, que le dicen cada rato a esta declarante las dichas Hijas de la Orden 'la cabeza de la cabeza' y que la mitra de esta ciudad de México se la quita el Sr. Arzobispo este convento, y así lo cantan los muchachos por la calle*[586]

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585 [That they {the clerics} should go home and eat chicken, they don't know what religion is] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f164v Clara del SS. Sacramento 18 February 1661.

586 [There were no insolent replies or ripostes as now when the *Hijas de la Orden* say to this witness all the time that she {as the prioress} is the Head of the Head and that this convent will take the mitre of the city of Mexico away from the Archbishop and young boys sing this in the street] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f166v - 167r Clara del SS. Sacramento 19 February 1661.

Just as in Andrea de San Francisco's account, Clara links issues of sex and money in her denunciation of the *Hijas de la Orden.* She also reports having seen goods being gathered in the convent to send to Spain in order to finance the *gachupina*'s cause. The convent in her view has become the centre of ecclesiastical politics and bargaining thanks to the connections existing between the *gachupina* nuns, the Vicereign, and members of the clergy.[587]

After these descriptions of the politics in which the convent has been involved and of the way it has been abused by the *Hijas de la Orden* in their attempt to seize power, Clara finally mentions something with a more personal and doctrinal content. She describes, in the same terms other witnesses have used, how the *Hijas de la Orden* claim to be dissatisfied by the confessions they make to secular rather than to Carmelite priests. The terms she uses for these descriptions are noncommittal, unlike her descriptions about politics in the convent. In this matter Clara is unwilling to offer any judgement. She will only say that she has noticed that the nuns are unhappy, but she does not know the precise reason for this. She can only add that the nuns sometimes use disrespectful names for their secular confessors.[588]

The testimony of María del Niño Jesús, one of the lay sisters in San José, is equally emphatic in its assertion that worldly motivations lie behind the behaviour of the *Hijas de la Orden.* She states that they use devotion to the Carmelite rule as a mask for their spiritual inadequacy and their desire for a less ascetic religious lifestyle.[589] The remainder of her testimony is given over to substantiating this first statement. In order to do so, she uses both evidence from her personal experience and accounts she has heard from third parties. The Inquisition does not intervene to make her attribute her sources but, as we have seen from Becerra's interrogation, the truth status of these two types of knowledge is very different.

In the case of things she has overheard, María del Niño Jesús's testimony is extraordinary for its force and the gravity of the calumnies it reports. The rumours being spread in the convent, according to this nun, go from saying that Andrea de San Francisco has abused her position as doorkeeper to such an extent that she is

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[587] Cf. Clara's cautious assertion concerning Barrientos when she says he is a holy man, but she wishes he had never entered the convent; *vicario de este convento, siervo de Dios, que nunca lo hubiera sido.* AGN Inq. 581 Exp 1 f167r Clara del SS. Sacramento 19 February 1661.

[588] AGN Inq. 581 Exp 1 f168r - 168v Clara del SS. Sacramento 19 February 1661.

[589] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f153r - 153v María del Niño Jesús 17 February 1661.

personally responsible for denying the last rites to several dying nuns by delaying in sending for a priest, charging her with spreading slanderous remarks about the Archbishop and his employees:

> *el Sr. Arzobispo [...] que es un gallego que criaba babas en sus tierras y que en una enjalma han de hacer embarcar y solapadamente Don Jacinto de la Serna le ponen nombres, llamándole de manteca.*[590]

Further on, the testimony provides accounts which are reminiscent of the commonplace anti-clerical conceptions and prejudices about monks and nuns: greedy, lecherous, sybaritic and hypocritical. Moreover, María del Niño Jesús's evidence, like Andrea de San Francisco's, works perfectly to mount a powerful condemnation of any close relation between the male and female branch of any religious order. Clearly, any such intimacy is sexually and spiritually suspect. María del Niño Jesús's declaration is so striking, it merits quoting at length:

> *Y que cuando venía [ ] a este convento los padres carmelitas [ ] abría la puerta a las cuatro de la mañana para llevarle las ollas grandes de tamales, pollos de conservar y agua de aloja que les hacían y la ropa de la sacristía lavada, cargando este trabajo las tres hermanas legas, y las coristas que son las Madres María de Sta. Inés y Margarita de San Bernardo, Catalina de Cristo, Francisca de San Joseph, Bernarda de la Concepción, Catalina de la Cruz y Ana de San Bartolomé. Se llevaban las conversaciones en las rejas con dichos religiosos llamando al fin de ellas a las demás religiosas, que no querían se hallasen a dichas pláticas con dichos carmelitas, y cuando entraban les hacían señal con el dedo en la boca para que dichos carmelitas mudasen plática y conversación.*[591]

It comes as something of a surprise, and is a good measure of the difficulty of assigning truth to the stories offered as testimony, that María del Niño Jesús reports the convent to be full of gossip and stories in what is a clearly disapproving tone.[592] She obviously ascribes this proliferation of narrations to the disunity prevalent in the convent, but this does not prevent her from reproducing some of the more spectacular

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590 [The Archbishop is a gallician {proverbial for miserly} who had illegitimate children in his homeland and that they would set him sailing on an seat and also they call Don Jacinto de la Serna names like greasy and stupid behind his back] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f154v María del Niño Jesús 17 February 1661.

591 [And when the Carmelite fathers came to this convent {they} would open the doors at four in the morning in order to give them great saucepans full of *tamales* {a meat pie made out of wheat and wrapped in banana leaves}, chickens to be preserved and a drink made out of water with honey and spices, which they made for them. Also, the linen for the Sacristy, ready washed. The three lay sisters {María is one of these} had to do this work. The senior sisters María de Sta. Inés, Margarita de San Bernardo, Catalina de Christo, Francisca de San Joseph, Bernarda de la Concepción, Catalina de la Cruz and Ana de San Bartolomé would spend time talking in the parlour with the said friars, only summoning the other sisters at the end of the chats because they did not want them to be present. And when the other sisters entered, they would make a sign, putting their fingers to their lips, so that the said Carmelite friars would change the subject and conversation] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f154v - 155r María del Niño Jesús 17 February 1661.

examples, or indeed of indulging in it herself. At certain points, the attempt to render these moments of eavesdropping truthfully means that María produces accounts of striking psychological realism. Thus, on one occasion, what María del Niño Jesús overhears illuminates not only the strategic political struggle going on in San José, but also the emotional conflict it entailed. She reports hearing one of the *Hijas de la Orden* saying she is so disappointed each time with her confession that she has taken to 'imagining' the confessor as a Carmelite, in order to comfort herself:

> *yo, cada vez que entro en el confesionario pienso 'carmelita', que no hay prelada a quien decirle ésto, que de esta pena ha dos meses que estoy muy mala.*[593]

Another instance of this emotional conflict may also be seen in the fact that María herself asks to be allowed to reappear before the Inquisition two days after this first interrogation. The issue of whether there existed a doctrinal sin in the cloister or not, and whether the nuns themselves could identify it and excise it, is clearly not a simple one. Its complication does not only lie at the epistemological level exhibited by the Inquisition's concern with the truth status of declarations, but also at an emotional and material level; how exactly would heterodoxy be lived in the cloister, how would it feel?[594]

It is this kind of question which seems to have prompted the return of María del Niño Jesús to the dock. She declares that she feels she has not expressed herself honestly and perhaps there is something doctrinally suspect in what she has witnessed. She has her testimony read back to her and decides to elaborate on one part of it. In this elaboration, she links the disdain the *Hijas de la Orden* express for non-Carmelites with a stance that could be interpreted as doctrinally mistaken - a connection the Inquisition's loaded questions encourage. Significantly, the way she describes this

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592 *todo es cuentos y chismes* AGN Inq. 581 Exp 1 f155r v María del Niño Jesús 17 February 1661.

593 [Each time I go into the confessional, I think; Carmelite. And there does not exist a Prioress whom I can tell this and I have been suffering for two months from this difficulty] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f154r María del Niño Jesús 17 February 1661.

594 It does not seem too far-fetched to see Teresa de Jesús's testimony giving more information about the detail of convent life in this respect. In describing the effects of division on convent life she also provides insight into the anxiety that was felt in the community and how it was expressed - groups of nuns gathering together to exchange information whenever they can: *que les ha oído decir esta declarante en muchas ocasiones así en las recreaciones a que se juntan después de comer y cenar y en otras en diferentes partes de este convento* [that this witness has heard them say so on many occasions, at recreation after lunch and dinner when they get together as well as in different corners of this convent] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f132v Teresa de Jesús 15 February 1661

group of nuns in this instance is as *gachupinas* rather than as *Hijas de la Orden*, emphasising the importance of the cultural divisions also at play:

> *... tiene algunos escrúpulos, de que le parece o malicia que esta doctrina la entienden las madres gachupinas, que son María de Sta. Inés y Margarita de San Bernardo y Ana de San Bartolomé, de los padres Carmelitas descalzos, pues dicen las madres María de Sta. Inés y Ana de San Bartolomé que sienten tanto que se muera la dicha Margarita de San Bernardo sin el [ ] consuelo con que muere de que no le confiesen sus religiosos.*[595]

María de los Angeles, who also gives evidence against the *Hijas de la Orden*, seems to suffer a similar moment of vacillation. After having given her main testimony she reappears before the Tribunal, but is only able to hint at the emotional turmoil behind her inarticulacy. She says that the *Hijas de la Orden* eavesdrop on her confessions and that they insult her so grievously that she cannot even bring herself to repeat their words. She also mentions that they hold the nuns who disagree with them to be *descomulgadas* - excommunicated.[596]

This moment of extremely personal and inarticulate anxiety is in strong contrast to the rest of María de los Angeles's testimony, given on a different day. The difference seems to be prompted by how seriously the witness thinks about the doctrinal nature of the accusation. As soon as any of the nuns really turn to this issue, instead of to the political and institutional manifestations of the struggle in the convent, their accounts become very subjective and often strike the tone of 'psychological realism' I have described above. The manner in which the narratives of the political and institutional ramifications are recounted is also personal - made up as it often is of overheard information and the personal experience of events - but it does not enter the realm of feeling and emotion in the way that thinking about doctrine seems to prompt.

Thus, when she tells the institutional story, María de los Angeles's testimony is perhaps the most neutral in tone, if not in content, of those provided by any of the *Clérigas monigotas*. She describes how the founding mothers had wanted to place the convent under the Carmelite friars from the beginning, but that the then Archbishop, Pérez de la Serna, had refused to allow this. Notably, María de los Angeles also makes

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[595] [she has some doubts, or at least it seems wicked to her, that this doctrine is held about the Carmelite fathers (being that only they have the spirit of God) by the Spanish nuns María de Sta. Inés and Margarita de San Bernardo and Ana de San Bartolomé, as both María de Sta. Inés and Ana de San Bartolomé say that they are terribly upset that the said Margarita de San Bernardo will die without the consolation of being confessed by friars from her own order] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f171v Clara del SS. Sacramento 19 February 1661.

the linguistic slip by which the term *gachupina* becomes the self-evident synonym of 'sinful' or 'scheming'. Thus, in her testimony, when the Spanish nuns arrive in the convent, internecine struggles for power ensue as if by logical progression. No explanation of these struggles is attempted: clearly, the difference between *gachupinas* and *criollas*, which this testimony confirms, is all the explanation needed. The Spanish nuns are described as entering immediately into the power politics of the convent, campaigning to elect nuns sympathetic to their views, putting forward 'puppet' candidates and generally ignoring every hierarchical structure that stands in their way.[597]

The testimony of Teresa de Jesús confirms the strategic political games of the *Hijas de la Orden* which María de los Angeles has described. Interestingly, in an echo of some of Andrea de San Francisco's accusations, Teresa describes how the nuns use Carmelite history and tradition for their own purposes. Thus, the *Hijas de la Orden* create a myth of their own suffering, going so far as to claim that not even Sta. Teresa suffered as much as they, and that the situation in which they find themselves is worse than being in Barbary:

> *diciendo [ ] sus trabajos son mayores que los que padeció Sta. [ ], que todo lo de la Sta. es pintado para lo que ellas [ ], que a la Sta. nunca le quitaron a sus frailes, y a ellas hoy que están peor que en Berbería ...*[598]

This linking of the *gachupina*'s ambition and evil to their birth is the only interpretation that María de los Angeles or Teresa de Jesús offer. They make no attempt to qualify any of this behaviour in terms of its doctrinal content and, in María de los Angeles's case in particular, confine themselves to providing the circumstantial details that have characterised most of the rest of the testimonies.[599]

The Politics of Speech: Deploying *docta ignorantia*

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[596] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f205r María de los Angeles 23 January 1661.

[597] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f140r - 140v María de los Angeles, undated. Cf. especially how they treat the founding mother, Mariana de la Encarnación, as if she were a novice, *como si fuera novicia* f141r.

[598] [Saying that their troubles are greater than those suffered by the Saint, and that everything {she underwent} was but theatre in comparison to them { } that the Saint never had her friars taken from her like they have and that today they are worse off than finding themselves in Barbary] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f204v Teresa de Jesús, 23 January 1661. This accusation is repeated almost word for word by Teresa later in the same declaration, f132v.

[599] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f143r María de los Angeles, undated

Towards the end of Andrea de San Francisco's testimony, the Inquisition poses a number of questions which basically constitute the grounds on which the entire trial is founded. They concern, very precisely, the accusation of doctrinal irregularities in San José. Thus, Andrea is asked directly:

> *Preguntada qué doctrinas son las que dice en dicha su carta que no se admiten en este convento por ser de bonete, y cuáles doctrinas sean las que se admiten por ser de los padres Carmelitas*[600]

and in reply she simply repeats that some of the nuns refuse to give obedience to the secular clergy, claiming they should be subject to the order. Andrea does not indulge in theory but states that the *Hijas de la Orden* have little respect for the Archbishop and that they ridicule members of the secular clergy who come into the convent to confess them.[601] This is what she has said during her previous audiences, and the Inquisitors go on to press her, asking for more details about the exact doctrine these Carmelites hold. Andrea refuses to elaborate, referring them back to her audiences, saying;

> *y que las doctrinas que admiten y siguen de los religiosos Carmelitas son todo lo que tiene dicho en su audiencia, que se les ha oído decir a los religiosos Carmelitas así en pláticas como en conversaciones con la comunidad.*[602]

The only addition she makes is to emphasise that the *Hijas de la Orden* have been told that when confessing with the secular clergy, they should not divulge any breaking of the Carmelite rule, because the secular priests will misunderstand and misinterpret it. Andrea implies that this kind of advice had certainly been considered heretical at one point, at least by some sections of the clergy. She recounts how, during one of the Vicereign's visits, the *Hijas de la Orden* say such disrespectful things about the secular clergy that one of the persons present, the chaplain Cristóbal de Luna, is driven to pronounce, *esta doctrina es herética.*[603] Andrea further consolidates her case by claiming that other Carmelite fathers have told her that such beliefs are erroneous and abominable.[604] She, of course, does not hazard a personal opinion.

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600 [Asked which were the doctrines that she mentions in her letter as not being allowed in this convent because they were of the secular clergy and which were permitted because they were of the Carmelite fathers] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f120v Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.

601 AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f120v - 121r Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.

602 [And the doctrine that the Carmelites allow and follow are everything she has said in her audience that she heard them say in didactic chats and in conversation with the community] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f121r Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.

603 [This doctrine is heretical] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f122r Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.

604 AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f122v Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.

The Inquisitors go on to pose the most crucial question: does Andrea consider what the *Hijas de la Orden* say about confession to be orthodox?

> *Preguntada si sabe o ha entendido u oído decir que alguna o algunas personas de cualquier estado o condición que sean, hayan tenido, creído o enseñado así de palabra como por escrito, que cualquiera sacerdote legítimamente ordenado y aprobado para oír confesiones secretamente no puede oír todas y cualesquiera confesiones de las personas para quienes fuera aprobado y absolverlas sacramentalmente de sus pecados, estando con verdadera disposición*[605]

Given the exact wording of this question, Andrea cannot respond to it affirmatively. She is very precise and says she has not heard anyone hold these opinions in the convent, *sólo lo que tiene dicho de pedir confesores Carmelitas.*[606] She continues to refuse to enter into a doctrinal discussion, or to offer a judgement, and stands by what she has already said. Andrea reiterates that she definitely has not heard the *Hijas de la Orden* say that members of the secular clergy are unable to absolve them in confession. The same question is posed to several of the nuns who testify against the *Hijas de la Orden.* Given that every ordained priest had to the power to absolve sins, the fact that the nuns seem to have placed this in doubt is, ultimately, the reason why the Inquisition is present in the convent. Without exception, the nuns reply with the same distance and refusal to engage with the precise terms of the question which characterises Andrea de San Francisco's answer.

Thus, Clara del SS. Sacramento refuses to enter into a discussion about the possible issues of faith behind the behaviour of the *Hijas de la Orden*, saying that she has not asked them the reason why they act as they do, nor have they offered to provide one. What does re-emerge from Clara's reply is the gravity of the breach. The *Hijas de la Orden* say that confessing with a non-Carmelite is like trying to confess in Basque: completely incomprehensible.[607] Clara del SS. Sacramento also repeats, on

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[605] [Asked if she knows or has understood or heard said by a person or persons of any estate or condition that it was believed or taught, either in word or writing, that any priest, legitimately ordained and qualified to hear confidential confession be not able to hear all and any confession by whomsoever he was appointed to confess and that he be able to absolve them of their sins, according to the sacraments, they being willing] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f124r Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.

[606] [Only what she has already said about asking for Carmelite confessors] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f124r Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.

[607] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f169r Clara del SS. Sacramento 19 February 1661 The great majority of the accusations levelled by the nuns remain at this allusive, often metaphorical level. They retell anecdotes which may be interpreted as having a doctrinal dimension, but they never make this dimension apparent themselves. Thus, María de los Angeles, when answering the direct question of whether heterodox doctrines are held in the convent recounts how during a meal and extraordinary mortification she hears

first hand evidence since she was herself present, the claim that María de Sta. Inés said to the Vicereign that she would rather confess with a lay Carmelite friar than with a secular priest. However, Clara mitigates the strength of this anecdote, which could be construed as containing some elements regarding doctrine, by saying that she is sure the comment was 'only an exaggeration'.[608]

While María de los Angeles makes no reply at all to the question, María del Niño Jesús's answer could be taken as emblematic of the hermeticism displayed by the nuns when asked about matters of doctrine:

> *sólo se acuerda haber oído a la madre Francisca de San Joseph, habrá uno o dos años, entrando en un confesionario en que estaba sacerdote clérigo, que le parece era el Lic. Mercado, que ella no podía confesar sus pecados todos con clérigo, sin dar otra razón por qué no los podía confesar, y ésto responde.*[609]

The second question which is posed first to Andrea de San Francisco and then repeated to various of the other nuns is also concerned with whether the *Hijas de la Orden* ascribe special priestly powers to the Carmelite fathers - a belief which could be condemned as heretical because of its implication that other religious orders were somehow less spiritually qualified:

> *Preguntada si ha sabido u oído decir o entendido en cualquier manera o que se haya enseñado por escrito o de palabra, que el espíritu de Dios está atado a solas ciertas personas o sean clérigos o religiosos, y que solas las dichas personas lo tengan o les sea concedido y no a otra persona?*[610]

Andrea's answer to this question is in a similar vein to the one she gave to the previous question - a refusal to repeat its terminology and a reaffirmation of what she has declared in her previous audiences. On this occasion, Andrea de San Francisco is only willing to offer an observation, rather than an accusation, and uses a different terminology to that of the question. Thus, she claims that the *Hijas de la Orden* think

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Catalina de Christo say that she was 'losing her soul' because she was not fulfilling the Carmelite rule. She also says she has heard Margarita de San Bernardo say that no nun in the convent was in a fit state for salvation because they were not fully Carmelites. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f145r María de los Angeles, undated.

[608] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f169v - 170r Clara del SS. Sacramento 19 February 1661.

[609] [She only remembers having heard Francisca de San Joseph say, perhaps one or two years ago, as she was going into a confessional where there was a secular priest who she thinks was *licenciado* Mercado, that she could not confess her sins to a member of the secular clergy. She did not give any reason why she could not confess with them and this is her reply] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f156r María del Niño Jesús 17 February 1661.

[610] [Asked if she has known or heard or understood in any way that, in writing or by word, it has been taught that the spirit of God is bound only to certain people, be these priests or monks, and that only these

that only the Carmelites are appropriate confessors because they keep the same rule, and also because they consider them to be the most spiritually perfect and saintly persons in the Church:

> *solo los padres Carmelitas descalzos son a propósito para confesarlas, dando por causa que ellos guardan la misma regla y son los más perfectos y santos de cuantos hay en la Iglesia.*[611]

Andrea's curt reply is the most expansive, both María del Niño Jesús and María de los Angeles simply state they have never heard, understood, or known of any such doctrine being held in San José. It is again apparent that the nuns refuse to enter a discussion in the terms set up by the Inquisition. They are astute enough to know what heresy is and thus they fall back on women's ignorance as a strategy. Their silence however, is also eloquent - in part because it stems from a tradition which makes women's ignorance a sign of their intelligence and virtue. This tradition was, of course, governed by certain forms and Teresa de Jesús's answer to the question is very interesting in this context because she uses the specialised vocabulary belonging to this type of knowledge. It consists of the well established and widely diffused mystical lexicon pertaining to water and religious illumination. Such an idiom was clearly the legitimate one for a nun's spiritual expression. The sources for such language would have been manifold in the convent, from spiritual handbooks to Sta. Teresa's own writings.

> *Dijo que a solas las dichas madres que ha referido llamadas las Hijas de la Orden les ha oído decir, en cualquier ocasión que se ofrece, que las religiosas que no desearan ser enseñadas de sus religiosos los Carmelitas, que no tienen buen espíritu, porque ellos que son la fuente de las cosas de la religión y que se las pueden enseñar, que todo lo demás es andar bebiendo en chapullos sucios y turbios*[612]

Teresa de Jesús's reply maintains a 'distance' from the accusation implicit in the Inquisitors' question, both by using this specialised vocabulary and by replying in an

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certain people have it or have been conceded it and no one else] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f126r Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.

[611] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f126r Andrea de San Francisco 11 February 1661.

[612] [She said she had only heard those nuns, the so called *Hijas de la Orden*, say on every possible occasion, that the nuns who do not want to be taught by the Carmelite friars do not have holy spirits because they (the Carmelite friars) are the fountain of knowledge about the order and can teach it, whereas anything else is to go drinking in dirty and muddied puddles] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f135r Teresa de Jesús 15 February 1661. In her testimony, María de los Angeles uses exactly the same metaphor, this time in reported speech, clearly, the *Hijas de la Orden* themselves employed it. f143r María de los Angeles, undated.

anecdotal rather than substantial manner. She never hazards an opinion or interprets facts, but instead attempts only to present them. Nevertheless, her choice of words is of course significant, most of the anecdotes remaining at the level of religious *practice* and of how the *Hijas de la Orden* show their dissatisfaction:

> *... se iban al confesionario a los confesores clérigos, y en particular al Don Jacinto de la Serna, a hacerles preguntas de cosas del espíritu y de las observancias de la regla y constituciones y no habiéndoles satisfecho, vió esta declarante que hacían risa y donaire de lo que las respondían.*[613]

Reporting that the *Hijas de la Orden* reinterpret Sta. Teresa's words is the nearest that Teresa de Jesús comes to direct accusation. Even this, however, is tempered by the personal content of the declaration. Teresa de Jesús's statement is more about her reaction than about the doctrinal correctness of the *Hijas de la Orden* - a move away from any pretence of possessing abstract knowledge, to the assertion of subjective experience and sensation, which has been apparent throughout these replies.

Teresa de Jesús concludes by saying that she has nothing further to add as she avoids all such conversations because they make her *inquieta* - ill at ease.[614] That the source of this disquiet is both very personal and spiritually entirely legitimate is clear from another comment in her statement. She discusses how the conversations she overhears about confession plunge her into doubt about the legitimacy of her own confessions and at this moment, something of the genuine distress that this institutional wrangle has caused in the convent can be sensed in her words:

> *[declaran] que en este convento no se hacia confesión bien hecha. Ellas (ésto es las dichas llamadas Hijas de la Orden) porque no podían y las otras (que son esta declarante y las que dan la obediencia al ordinario) porque no querían. Lo que le causó a esta declarante grande espanto porque como las culpas que cometió las dice al confesor llanamente como ellas son ...*[615]

María de los Angeles, when asked if she thinks any heretical doctrine of this kind has been taught in the convent, replies with a similarly personal anecdote. In her

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[613] [They {*Hijas de la Orden*} would go to confession with the clerics and in particular with Dn. Jacinto de la Serna and ask them questions about things of the spirit and the observance of the rule and its constitutions, and when they were not answered satisfactorily, this witness saw that they would laugh and ridicule the answers they had been given] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f137v Teresa de Jesús 15 February 1661.

[614] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f136r Teresa de Jesús 15 February 1661.

[615] [They claimed that in this convent confession was not done properly neither by them (the so called *Hijas de la Orden*) because they could not, nor by the others (meaning this witness and those whose obey the secular clergy) because they would not. This frightened this witness terribly, because all the sins she has committed she tells them fully and with simplicity to the confessor] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f135v Teresa de Jesús 15 February 1661.

account of how a young nun says she will not keep the rule until the convent is governed by the Carmelite fathers, the problem facing San José is set out very clearly as one which exists at the level of discipline and religious practice, not of theory and doctrine. María de los Angeles describes how she warns the young nun, María de San Juan, that she might die in a sin if she uses the convent divisions as an excuse not to practice the Carmelite rule:

> *diciéndola esta declarante 'Qué bueno sería no guardar la regla ni tratar de perfección hasta estar a la orden, y en el entretiempo viniese la muerte', respuesta que le costó caro a esta declarante, dándole graves penitencias a petición de las dichas llamadas Hijas de la Orden*[616]

As in all the previous testimonies, it is patent that the nuns are loath blatantly to accuse each other of heresy, though they are quick to levy charges of laxity and sinfulness. Teresa de Jesús, in her reply to the Inquisition's question on the teaching of heterodoxy in the convent refutes the idea that the nuns hold any doctrinal position whatever. In her opinion, their complaints about the secular clergy are much more prosaic:

> *pero que la doctrina co[mo] se contiene en la pregunta, ni nunca jamas ha sabido ni entendido por ningún camino que ninguna persona de este convento ni de fuera de él la haya [ ] ni la tenga ni la crea ni la enseña, porque aunque dichas religiosas llamadas Hijas de la Orden porfían tanto en confesarse con religiosos Carmelitas descalzos, no es porque digan que ellos solos las pueden absolver, antes cuando hablaban de esta materia [no] andan con metafísicos, reduciéndolo a que se quieren confesar con dichos padres Carmelitas porque entienden su regla y se quieren con ellos comunicar y tratar las cosas de sus almas*[617]

This concern to demote the terms of the debate from theory to practice and from doctrine to religious discipline is perhaps the only point in common between the warring factions in San José, and as such its significance should not be underestimated. It clearly unites the nuns in a representation of their convent and the spirituality within it as being removed from the theoretical qualifications of piety proper to the Inquisitors'

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616 [And this witness asked what good would it be to not keep rules and not try to achieve perfection until she was subject to the order if in the meantime death attained her? And this reply cost this witness dearly, being given strong penances at the request of these *Hijas de la Orden*] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f145v - 146r María de los Angeles, undated.

617 [She has never known or understood that the doctrine, as expressed in the question, to be held in any way by anybody in this convent or outside it { } or hold it or believe it or teach it. Because, although those nuns called the *Hijas de la Orden* insist on confessing with Carmelite friars it is not because they say the friars are the only ones who can absolve them. Rather, when they talk of this matter, they do not indulge in metaphysics, but reduce it to the fact that they want to confess with said Carmelite friars because they understand the rule and they thus want to communicate the things of their souls {with them}] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f134v - 135r Teresa de Jesús 15 February 1661.

terms of reference, and instead as inhabiting an enclosed feminine world where spirituality is experienced in a range of communal religious practices.

The Hijas de la Orden

Hijas de la Orden: the Anti-hagiography and Issues of Subjectivity

There are two communal letters from the group of nuns known as the *Hijas de la Orden* in the Inquisition file, one is undated and addressed to the Archbishop and the other, dated 21 February (the middle of the trial), is addressed directly to the Inquisition Tribunal. The correspondence produced by the *Hijas de la Orden* is characterised by its biographical emphasis - the documents all include a description of Andrea de San Francisco and attempt to link this description of her directly to the convent's misfortunes. The reason for this biographical approach is made evident in the first communal letter which argues for a different interpretation of the divisions in San José, saying that these are not due to the intransigence of two ideological groups, but rather to purely personal likes and dislikes. The letter describes how the convent held a chapter in which the community refuted the charge that an order had been given forbidding anyone to talk to Andrea de San Francisco, thus also rejecting the idea of a group politics or strategy being implemented by the *Hijas de la Orden.* The prioress reports that the community stopped talking to Andrea because she made them feel ill at ease, but that each decision has been taken on an individual basis:

> *... en capítulo, presente nuestra Hermana Andrea de San Francisco, examinando a todas en común y a cada una en particular, si tal precepto se ha puesto de que no la hablen, y a una voz dijeron todas que tal no se ha dicho. Y que el abstenerse de conversaciones con ella es por haber experimentado ser las suyas siempre muy nocivas y haber tenido costumbre de inquietarlas desuniéndolas del amor y sujeción a los prelados ...*[618]

The descriptions of Andrea de San Francisco which emerge from this account are inspired by the hagiographic model. In these writings, Andrea is the anti-type of the virtuous and saintly nun. Other models of sinful womanhood are also evident, and it is

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[618] [Being present in the chapter our Sister Andrea de San Francisco and asking them all together and each individually if such an order had been given, to not talk to her, they replied with one voice that such an order had not been given. And that abstaining from entering into conversation with her is because they have discovered that her conversation is always poisonous and because she usually distresses them,

perhaps a matter of surprise that nuns should apply the misogynist *topoi* of the day so easily to one of their number, particularly since this was a trial and any accusations could very easily be used against them if they were to lose their case. From one perspective however, the choice to pin the argument to a personal level is completely intelligible. These nuns wish to argue for the primacy of the Carmelite order - a religious grouping that existed to enforce a rule guaranteed to bring the individual to salvation. Their example of what horrors can happen if the Carmelite rule is disregarded is clearly to be found in a fallen individual - in this case, Andrea de San Francisco. The gravity of the situation may be gauged by the apocalyptic terms employed by the *Hijas de la Orden* in their second communal letter to the Tribunal, where they despair over ever reforming Andrea and invoke Sta. Teresa:

> *sucederá lo que Nuestra Sta. Madre parece que previno con espíritu profético [ ], dijo que en un año de mal gobierno se acabaría la observancia de un convento, porque hechas a la relajación las monjas, es muy dificultoso volver a lo primero*[619]

One of the ambiguities of hagiography is illustrated very clearly in these anti-hagiographies however, namely the antagonism between a life perceived as the unfolding of an immanent virtue and a life perceived as the practice of a virtue to be constantly attained. It is in this second movement of hagiography, which allows for much more narrative freedom in terms of *exemplae*, that history is resolutely inscribed in the writing.[620] For example, the *Hijas de la Orden* state that in their opinion, Andrea de San Francisco is being used by the devil to corrupt San José. Nevertheless, the attribution of responsibility is in fact more complex than this, and does not exonerate Andrea from a personal share of it. The devil, as so often happens, has simply taken advantage of her nature;

> *... la cizaña que [...] ha sembrado el enemigo de 4 años a esta parte valiéndose del espíritu inquieto y bullicioso de la hermana Andrea de San Francisco*[621]

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distancing them from the love and obedience they owe to their prelates] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f40r Letter to Archbishop, undated.

[619] [What our holy mother foresaw will happen; that in a year of bad government, the religious observance of a convent will fall off, for once the discipline of nuns is relaxed, it is very difficult to return to what it was formally] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f178v *Hijas de la Orden* communal letter 21 February 1661.

[620] Cf. my own argument in the previous chapters on travel narrative and historiography.

[621] [The divisive hatred {...} which the enemy has planted for four years, using the turbulent and wild spirit of sister Andrea de San Francisco] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f175r *Hijas de la Orden* communal letter 21 February 1661.

In this way, the *Hijas de la Orden* are able to ascribe diabolical power to Andrea's actions while also maintaining the tension between immanent characteristics and acquired ones.

The inversion of the hagiographic norm is extraordinarily rigorous in the second communal letter. Andrea de San Francisco's childhood is described as one of wildness and turbulence of spirit. Significantly, her visit to a convent as a young girl, an erstwhile commonplace opportunity to describe precocious saintliness in hagiographies, is in her case a premonitory sign of the future disturbance she will cause in San José:

> *... llevándola cuando niña con sus parientes al convento de San Jerónimo, traía al convento asombrado, haciéndoles creer que veía duendes por sólo espantarlas*[622]

Not surprisingly, the mature nuns in the convent detect this wild spirit and recommend she not be allowed to profess. Unfortunately, according to the letter, their advice is disregarded. The convent is not weak however, and it does try to save Andrea by educating her turbulent nature - a challenge which is at once a personal one and an institutional one - addressed directly to the Carmelite rule:

> *pues conociendo las preladas en ella un natural inquieto y bullicioso e inclinado altivez y soberbia, la iban con maña, discreción y caridad, procurándola amoldar a nuestro sencillo y religioso modo de proceder ...*[623]

This discipline, described as a brake (*el freno*) is intended to hold Andrea's spirit within the strictures of the rule. She, however, immediately rebels and in contrast to the rhetoric of measure and definition used by her superiors, she indulges in careless and overflowing language, changing sides whenever it suits her, defining these sides differently, and generally causing confusion and distress to a community that considers itself ordered and united.[624]

During the description of the chaos which they believe Andrea has brought to the convent, the *Hijas de la Orden* employ another inversion of a hagiographic

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[622] [When she was a young girl her relatives took her to the convent of San Jerónimo where she amazed the community by making them believe she could see fairies, all in order to frighten them] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f175r *Hijas de la Orden* communal letter 21 February 1661. The gravity of this story's implications in terms of sorcery and superstition in an Inquisition context should not be underestimated.

[623] [The senior nuns, knowing her to have a wild and turbulent spirit, inclined to arrogance and pride, went at her with skill, discretion and charity, trying to shape her to our simple and pious way] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f175r *Hijas de la Orden* communal letter 21 February 1661.

[624] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f175r *Hijas de la Orden* communal letter 21 February 1661.

commonplace: instead of silence, loquacity.[625] Logically enough, Andrea is represented as loose not only with her tongue, but with all kinds of communication. She does not respect the cloister at all. This disrespect ranges from her abuse of her position as doorkeeper (which she exploits in order to communicate with her family and other influential people - a charge she has herself made against others) to the worldliness of her desires as a nun. She is described in this letter as a 'career' nun, wanting to be a great reformer like Sta. Teresa, and planning it carefully with the support of her family and well placed patrons.[626] Thus, she parades around the convent making gestures and holding little ritual ceremonies that disturb the peace of the cloister and draw attention to the persecution she sees herself as suffering.

> *... anduviese por la casa haciendo gestos y ceremonias de hincarse de rodillas con exclamaciones a Dios, puestas las manos, pidiendo justicia sobre quien así la perseguía ...*[627]

The Inquisitorial context of these declarations should not be forgotten. The description of this kind of theatrical feminine piety, especially in a convent, would immediately have aroused the suspicion of the judges.[628]

The argument constructed on hagiographic lines, however, does not remain at this level of types and anti-types throughout the letter. At certain points, the effects of disunion are vividly represented in very practical and 'naturalistic' terms. From the commonplace that Andrea should forget her worldly family and think only of her new

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[625] *Sus parlerias* [her chatter] *su buena labia* [her big mouth] *su demasía en hablar* [her excessive talk] AGN Inq. 581 Exp 1 f175r, 175v *Hijas de la Orden* communal letter 21 February 1661. Cf also Juana de San Elías's description of Andrea's seductive speech: *engañando con un modo tan parlero y halagueño que parece no hay mal en ella* [deceiving with a talkative and flattering manner that there seems to be no evil in her] AGN Inq. 581 Exp 1 f184v Letter Juana de San Elías, undated. Also Catalina de la Cruz, *habla todo el día* [she speaks all day long] *es tan abundante en sus palabras que ahoga a quien la oye* [she is so excessive with her words that she drowns anyone who listens to her] and the incredibly damning, *decir palabras muy feas no de carmelitas descalzas sino de mujeres perdidas de ese mundo* [saying ugly words, not those of a discalced carmelite but of a lost woman of the world] AGN Inq. 581 Exp 1 f160r - 161v Letter Catalina de la Cruz 18 February 1661.

[626] AGN Inq. 581 Exp 1 f175v-176r *Hijas de la Orden* communal letter 21 February 1661 f177r. The letter describes how Andrea manages to deceive the Archbishop. He takes her word as truth, according to the letter, and as a result neglects his duties to the convent, never visiting them to find out what is really going on. The accusation is clearly one of 'seduction'; again a serious charge in these circumstances. The accusation of being a self-conscious *reformadora* is repeated in Ana de San Bartolomé's undated letter, annexed to the communal one. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f180r, as well as in Juana de Sta. Teresa's, f186v.

[627] [Goes around the house making gestures and little ritual ceremonies like falling on her knees exclaiming to God, with hands outstretched and demanding justice be done to those who persecuted her so] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f17 *Hijas de la Orden* communal letter 21 February 1661.

[628] Cf. Juana de San Elías' remark that Andrea de San Francisco called nuns who disagreed with her *judías* for an equally inflammatory comment, given the context. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f184 r Letter Juana de San Elías, undated.

religious family after her profession, the letter moves on to describe the hagiographically less formulaic, but utterly moving and convincing reason why:

> *... no se malquiste con su propia nas [sic] y hermanos con quien vive y ha de morir en este convento, pues en ellas y no en los de fuera ha de hallar el socorro en sus necesidades y enfermedades y éstas le han de poner la candela de bien morir en la manos ...*[629]

Similarly, the hagiographic commonplace of the convent hierarchy turned upside-down by a rebellious nun is not devoid of a 'naturalistic' dimension in these testimonies. The lay nuns, who are supposed only to perform servant's tasks in the convent, and who are excluded from singing the Hours, have their consciousness 'raised' by Andrea de San Francisco who, it is claimed, promises them '*alivios y estimaciones*' - comforts and privileges - thus clearly lifting them above their station.[630] The disapproval of the more senior nuns in this case seems not entirely divorced from the threat that Andrea's move poses to their own position, rather than the more ostensibly disinterested censure based on universal principles that the letter has attempted to maintain.

The most obvious and startling departures from this universality relate to the use of 'racial' terms by Andrea de San Francisco. The letter accuses her of having introduced this pernicious language of division into the convent, making a difference between *gachupinas* and *criollas*. Moreover, it claims that she does not limit herself to distinguishing between the two groups in this way, but also invokes the derogatory connotations attached to the terms. Thus, when her offer of forming an alliance is refused by a *criollo* nun, Andrea says the entire *criollo* community of the convent has failed to prosper because it has *ánimos apocados y de indias* - the weak will characteristic of people born in the Indies.[631] In María de San Cirilio's testimony, this charge is repeated. On this occasion, Andrea de San Francisco is accused of having said that a nun who did not stand her ground and changed her mind during an election was an *india*:

> *hasta que una de las contrarias dió el voto, porque era una India, esto decía*[632]

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[629] [That she should not fall out with her own brothers and sisters, with whom she lives and will die in this convent. In them she will find comfort for her needs and illnesses and these will be the ones to put the last candle into her hands on her death bed] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f176r *Hijas de la Orden* communal letter 21 February 1661.

[630] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f176r *Hijas de la Orden* communal letter 21 February 1661.

[631] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f176v *Hijas de la Orden* communal letter 21 February 1661.

[632] [Until one of the ones who was against changed her vote, because she was an Indian/born in the Indies, this is what she {Andrea de San Francisco} said] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f190r Letter María de San Cirilio, undated. The ambiguity 'indian'/born in the Indies' is impossible to resolve, but the latter

Although the *Hijas de la Orden* may have had as an ideal a saintly community in which birth and provenance had no influence, it is clear that this group of nuns also used the terminology of *linaje* as way to define and demarcate boundaries. As a result, the most obvious insult which could be made against Andrea de San Francisco is that her birth (rather than her virtue) makes her unsuitable to be a Carmelite. Effectively enough, she is eventually insulted in precisely this way, and in an impressively violent manner, by Catalina de la Cruz. In her letter of 18 February, Catalina complains that Andrea de San Francisco is ungrateful, and is reacting to the fact that the convent accepted her without a dowry, rescuing her from the 'rubbish pile' from which she came:

> *perdonándole del dote, sacándola del muladar.*[633]

Catalina de la Cruz's concluding statement about Andrea de San Francisco is as forceful as her opening one, and striking also for its imbrication in the ambiguous connotations of the birth argument:

> *digo que estuviera mejor en otro convento y nos dejara vivir en paz, porque aquel espíritu no es para Carmelita descalza, que es gente muerta, y ella está muy viva y cuidadosa de su linaje.*[634]

In this comment, Catalina manages to join the 'nature' argument (where Andrea de San Francisco is clearly not born to be a Carmelite) with the 'nurture' thesis, which represents Andrea as a devious person. On the one hand, Catalina condemns Andrea for calculating about family and background, which should be of no importance. On the other, Catalina herself uses the arguments about birth, both to bar Andrea from the status of Carmelite *and* to berate her for her ungratefulness. Clearly, the logic of the rhetoric is slippery. The enormous importance given to birth and to provenance in the cloister is, however, forcefully reconfirmed. Whether Catalina de la Cruz chooses to disregard birth or to argue in favour of it as a mark of value and honour, her testimony

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interpretation suggests a far wider application of the stereotype which fits in with Alberro's findings and ties in with the *Gachupín* claim that all *criollos* were Indians beneath the skin. Alberro (1992)

[633] [Excusing her the payment of the dowry and rescuing her from the rubbish pile from which she came] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f160r Letter Catalina de la Cruz 18 February 1661.

[634] [I say she would be better off in another convent and leave us to live in peace because that spirit {of hers} is not fitting for a Discalced Carmelite, who is a person dead {to the world} while she is very much alive and concerned with her family and background] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f161r Letter Catalina de la Cruz 18 February 1661.

circles around the theme, and each time she speaks directly of the subject the emotional tone rises considerably.

Ana de San Bartolomé writes two letters to the Inquisition concerning Andrea de San Francisco. One is dated 17 February and is thus composed before the communal letter from the *Hijas de la Orden* of which she is also a signatory. The other is undated. In the letter of the 17th, she presents the situation in which the convent of San José finds itself as very simple to understand. Since the banishment of Carmelite fathers from the convent by the Archbishop, discipline has declined and religious observance relaxed. The causal logic of her description is overwhelming and designed to make the solution to the problem unavoidably clear - the return of the Carmelite fathers is called for:

> *... el más principal punto que tenía que decir y es que desde que se les quitó a las religiosas de este convento, por el Sr. Arzobispo Don Mateo Zaga de Burqueiro, totalmente la comunicación con los religiosos Carmelitas descalzos que desde su fundación habían tenido, acudiendo a confesarlas, hacerles pláticas y darles los ejercicios espirituales en su religión; se halla este convento, en cuatro años poco más o menos que se les quito a las religiosas dicha comunicación, muy atracado en todo género de virtud y religión, y no sienten ni tienen aquel fervor y espíritu que cuando comunicaban a dichos religiosos, atracadas las almas en la oración y mortificación, ni tienen aquella quietud y sosiego con que de antes vivían*[635]

It is interesting that it is precisely this emphasis on the power of the Carmelite rule to impose virtue which should make Ana launch into the first 'anti hagiography' of Andrea de San Francisco. She quickly leaves this abstract argument about discipline and religious observance in order to illustrate what she means by focusing on Andrea de San Francisco and her role in dividing the convent against itself by pandering to the Archbishop and the Mexican élite and generally behaving as the anti-type of the good Carmelite. In these accounts, there is no doubt that Andrea de San Francisco is evil. The inversion of the hagiographic model is complete. Not only does the evil nun have an evil nature (over which she has no power) but she also has an active malevolence

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[635] [The most important thing she had to say is that since the Archbishop Mateo Zaga de Burqueiro totally banned the nuns from communicating with the Carmelite fathers, who from the foundation of the convent had been coming to confess them, preach and give them their order's spiritual exercises, this convent, having lacked this communication for about four years, finds itself stagnating in every kind of virtue and piety and the nuns do not feel or have the same fervour and spirit as when they communicated with the said fathers, finding their souls stranded in prayer and mortification; nor do they have that tranquillity and calm with which they lived previously] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f151r Ana de San Bartolomé 17 February 1661.

which involves her in particularly damnable activities marked by their artifice and calculation. Thus, Ana de San Bartolomé describes Andrea de San Francisco as,

> *aquella dicha siempre se ha mostrado adversa y contraria a su religión desde que profesó.*[636]

and again, her nature is condemned as evil and inclined to things contrary to the Carmelite rule:

> *su natural de la dicha Andrea de San Francisco ha sido siempre más inclinada al desahogo y a sus comodidades que a las estrechuras de la regla.*[637]

Nevertheless, Andrea de San Francisco's evil is also reasoned. She deliberately corrupts - using the attribute of dissimulation, *con modos y trucos*, (more usually attributed to the devil) - both the novices, who are the most vulnerable members of the community, as well as other nuns who are weak; *algunas flacas y de menos observancia.*[638] This terrible narrative portrait is completed by a description of how Andrea abuses her post as *tornera* or doorkeeper. She communicates with all kinds of lay people, disrespecting and breaching the cloister in the most radical way:

> *descubriendo los secretos de la religión a personas seculares*[639]

This accusation is made several times against Andrea. Clearly, the post of *tornera* has considerable significance. I would argue that it is both the frontier between the cloister and the outside world, and the point of contact between the two. As such, it is crucial the doorkeeper should manage the relationship between the two worlds decorously. Andrea stands accused, however, not only of abusing the post but also, in a sense, of misrepresenting it.

In her second letter, Ana de San Bartolomé returns to the issue of immanent and acquired evil in Andrea de San Francisco and it becomes increasingly evident in this kind of testimony that the nuns are approaching a description of 'subjectivity' which is extraordinarily modern. According to Ana de San Bartolomé, Andrea de San

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636 [The said nun has always shown herself against and contrary to her order, ever since she professed] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f151r Ana de San Bartolomé 17 February 1661.

637 [The nature of the said Andrea de San Francisco has always been more inclined to indulgence and her own comfort rather than to the strictures of the rule] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f151v Ana de San Bartolomé 17 February 1661.

638 [With stratagems and tricks {...} some weak nuns who were less disciplined in religious observance] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f152r Ana de San Bartolomé 17 February 1661.

639 [Revealing the secrets of the order to lay people] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f152r Ana de San Bartolomé 17 February 1661.

Francisco displays a complete lack of a sense of 'self'. This is not exactly a lack of reason, but clearly there is something fearful and violent in this submersion of her character in her passions:

> *está tan ciega con sus pasiones que no conoce los daños tan grandes que ha causado y está causando a este convento.*[640]

Again though, as in previous arguments about Andrea's 'natural' evil, the argument of immanence or of the inevitable, is complemented by a charge of calculation and sophistication which is even more damning. Ana de San Bartolomé describes Andrea de San Francisco as being moved by *envidia* - envy - and as spreading not only slanderous remarks against another nun's good character, but also malicious sexual innuendo in an attempt to sully the saintly reputation this woman was gaining in the city.[641]

Ana de San Bartolomé's indictment of Andrea de San Francisco rests principally on two very similar moments when Andrea uses *palabras demedidas* - excessive language. The personal nature of this complaint - the fact that it upset Ana de San Bartolomé for reasons that may in principle be connected to models of piety and correct religious practice, but are ultimately associated with a subjective interpretation of what constitutes good behaviour, is evident. The first instance which she can recall is one in which Andrea de San Francisco is called away from the convent parlour where she is speaking with her sister, in order to attend mass. She is requested to do so by the prioress, who then refuses permission for the sister to return after the mass, provoking Andrea into a violent tantrum:

> *... causóle esto muy gran pesadumbre e inquietud que mostró por las palabras que le oí decir, que Dios la vengara, que a su Divina Majestad pedía justicia y venganza.*[642]

In the second instance, another violent outburst is directed against Ana de San Bartolomé personally. She therefore remembers it vividly:

> *en dos ocasiones he procurado hablar a esta pobre hermana con amor y hermandad, compadecida de su desbaratamiento, por ver si la podía reducir a la*

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640 [She is so blinded by her passions that she ignores the great damage she has done and is doing to this convent] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f180r Letter Ana de San Bartolomé, undated.

641 AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f180r Letter Ana de San Bartolomé, undated. The maligned nun is María de Sta. Inés.

642 [This caused her great annoyance and torment, which she showed in the words I heard her say, that God would revenge her, that she called on His Divine Majesty to give her vengeance and justice] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f180v Letter Ana de San Bartolomé, undated.

unión y paz. Con que la he convidado dos veces, la dije, 'hermana Andrea de San Francisco, mucho me pesa de sus desconsuelos, por amor de Dios que se aquiete', apenas me dejó decir la palabra cuando volvió a mí con una resolución y me dijo, 'Dios volverá por mí' o 'me vengará', no me acuerdo bien cuáles de estas palabras dijo, como la ví de tan enconada impenitencia, que hiciera un acto de humildad y mortificación en el refectorio, la cogí solas y le pedí con las manos puestas por Jesú Cristo y Santa Madre, que hiciera aquella mortificación delante de la comunidad, quedaría edificada si mostraba rendimiento y humildad. A ésto me miró con inclinación y nada le ha aprovechado, aprovéchele la gracia de Jesu Cristo.[643]

As in the other testimonies, María de San Juan also writes about Andrea de San Francisco's subjectivity, attempting to reach a conclusion as to whether the evil in it comes from an innate source or not. In this case, Andrea is once again perceived as not being fit to be a Carmelite, but on this occasion the metaphor used to express this is both extravagant and extremely revealing. María de San Juan describes her as a monster who, in her rebellion against the order, reneges on the most basic claims of family:

... que nos cause desunión e inquieta viendo un monstrua que es contraria a su misma madre la religión y a sus hermanos y hermanas y a Nra. Sta. madre Teresa de Jesús.[644]

This extreme statement is, however, rendered considerably more psychologically complex by María de San Juan's further comment that it is because of her own incapacity that Andrea does not wish any other nun to be a good Carmelite.[645] María de San Juan's letter is particularly interesting because it goes on to elaborate on these statements, first setting out very formally the authority upon which her evidence is based. This comes both from the experience of convent life - she had been enclosed

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[643] [On two occasions I have tried to speak to this poor sister with love and sisterliness, sympathetic to her distress, in order to see if I could bring her back to union and peace. And so I said, on two occasions, to her, 'Sister Andrea de San Francisco, your sadness weighs me down, in God's name, calm yourself'. She hardly let me say a word when she turned with determination and said, 'God will return for me, or God will revenge me', I do not really remember which she said, and as I saw her so set in impenitence I thought she ought to do an act of humility and mortification in the refectory and so when I saw her alone I asked, with my hands joined in supplication, that for Jesus Christ and Holy Mary, she do that mortification in front of the community; that she would be enlightened by it if she showed submission and humility. At this she looked at me with such rage that {certainly} nothing helps her, may the Grace of Jesus Christ be of help to her.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f181r Letter Ana de San Bartolomé, undated.

[644] [That it causes us disunion and disturbs us to see a monster set against her own mother which is religion, and her sisters and brothers, and our Holy Mother Sta. Teresa de Jesús] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f183r Letter María de San Juan, undated.

[645] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f181v Letter María de San Juan, undated. The most 'psychological' description of motive, especially resonant because of its concern with a family 'romance', comes in María de San Cirilio's testimony. Her letter is confused, but she says at one point that Andrea de San Francisco's resentment

for fourteen years - and what she has heard from trustworthy sources - the experience of other older nuns. Thus,

> *Digo como religiosa Carmelita descalza, que preguntada en qué manera nos inquieta o ha inquietado la hermana Andrea de San Francisco, respondo que ha 14 años poco más o menos que estoy en este convento y en dicho tiempo he experimentado por experiencia propia como diré después y por haberlo oído decir a religiosas antiguas ...*[646]

In fact, most of María de San Juan's testimony is of an exclusively personal nature and echoes the evidence offered by Ana de San Bartolomé. In her conclusion, María de San Juan states that she could have said much more but has preferred to mention only those things she can personally vouch for.[647] Like Ana de San Bartolomé before her, it seems to be conversations that she has had with Andrea de San Francisco which have brought her the most distress and remain vivid in her memory;

> *concluyo con decir que rara ha sido la vez que me he puesto a hablar con ella que no haya salido con menoscabo de mi alma ...*[648]

María de San Juan recounts a particularly telling moment when, during the election of a prioress, Andrea de San Francisco's harassment of the nuns was so great that she herself and a friend were obliged to jump through a window rather than confront Andrea.[649] This type of detail does not, of course, stand up to very close reading, and it would be unwise to give it too much importance. But it contributes strikingly to the texture of María de San Juan's statement. It marks the quality of the knowledge she professes about the other nun and her convent life in an unmistakable way, very much like the other moments I have described previously as 'naturalistic'.

There seem to be two independent rhetorical logics working in these testimonies. In one, the convent really does exist as a 'no place' of heavenly bodies possessing no culture, no family relations, no language and so presents itself as a place where Andrea de San Francisco's invocation of the world is particularly evil and

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stems from the fact that her sister was refused entry into the convent. This is never confirmed or denied in other testimonies. AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f189r-189v Letter María de San Cirilio, undated.

[646] [As a Discalced Carmelite nun, asked in which way Andrea de San Francisco has disturbed us, I declare that I have been in this convent about fourteen years and in that time I have learnt, through personal experience, as I will describe later, and through having heard older nuns speak.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f181v Letter María de San Juan, undated.

[647] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f182v - 183r Letter María de San Juan, undated.

[648] [And I conclude by saying that hardly ever has there been a time when I have spoken with her and have not done injury to my soul] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f182r Letter María de San Juan, undated.

[649] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f183v Letter María de San Juan, undated.

unwelcome. Thus, in María de San Juan's testimony, Andrea rubs (*sacándoles*) people's social and familial backgrounds in their faces, introducing the language of place of birth into the convent. This is described as a revelation of unwelcome things, things which have, or should have been, erased:

> *sacándoles sus linajes, cosa tan indecente y aborrecible en nuestra religión, introduciendo en este convento las oposiciones de mujeres de España y de esta tierra.*[650]

This kind of argument belongs to a very pure reading of hagiography, where Andrea de San Francisco represents the negative image of everything that constitutes the model. The second type of logic is concerned with a type of reasoning and narrative substantially extraneous to the pure hagiographic model. It uses *exemplae* and naturalism, both frequently connected to a notion of personal experience and subjective knowledge. This kind of rhetoric is much more polysemic and ambiguous than that of pure hagiography and as a result leads to the kind of densely textured and multivalent testimonies examined.

It becomes more easy in this context to understand why the difference felt to exist between the Old world and the New is a source of ambiguity and multiple meanings. Elsewhere, I have described how the brute reality of the New world caused a number of modifications to the cultural patterns of daily life in the convent and to its narration. Once more, in this Inquisition trial, the play of representations which has the convent at its centre proves itself especially rich. The guiding genre of hagiography, continually invoked and continually abused, provides a scale against which it is possible to measure the gravity and nature of the modifications caused by the perceived difference between model and lived reality, between the Old World and the New, between the Carmelite in Avila and the Carmelite in Mexico City.

In Juana de Sta. Teresa's testimony, this problem - a problem both for hagiography as a universal representational system and for quotidian convent life, supposedly trans-geographical and trans-cultural - is set out simply and eloquently:

> *inquiétanos también ver que sus lenguajes y sentimientos no son de carmelita descalza, porque si se trata de elección de preladas dice que más quiere burro que cargue que potro que me derribe, y habla en si somos criollas o gachupinas,*

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650 [Rubbing their backgrounds in their faces, an indecent and hateful thing in our order and introducing into this convent the difference between Spanish women and those from this land] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f181v - 182r Letter María de San Juan, undated.

diciéndolo a cada uno según su inclinación y en esta religión es muy dañoso esto de las tierras, porque somos del cielo todos.[651]

Juana uses a series of proverbial sayings that brings to her testimony the kind of allusive and revealing detail discussed above, and demanded by the Inquisition, even though she is arguing precisely for a representation of the convent which would restore its hagiographic saintliness to it, purifying it of such specificities and removing it from trial.

[651] [We are also disturbed by seeing that her language and feelings are not those of a Discalced Carmelite because when there is an election for prioress she says 'better a donkey that will carry me than a pony that will throw me off' and she discusses about whether we are *criollas* or *gachupinas*, saying 'each to his own' and in this religious order to speak of homelands is very damaging, because all of us in it are from {lit. belong to} Heaven.] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f186r Letter Juana de Sta. Teresa, undated.

Conclusion

> *Who that cares much to know the history of man, and how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time, has not dwelt, at least briefly, on the life of Saint Theresa [...] ?*

George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

Until recently, the answer to George Eliot's question would have been that few historians considered even a brief study of the extraordinary Spanish mystic and saint capable of shedding any light on the general history of man, or for that matter, of woman. However, new trends in scholarship, which I have drawn on in the thesis, have shown just how useful such 'unrepresentative' women from the past can be to our understanding of early modern society, and especially revelatory of the place of women within it.

The many other 'Teresas' about whom I have written may indeed have not found in Eliot's terms an 'epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action', but my goal has been to reinterpret the meaning of 'far-resonant action', precisely in order to render some measure of, if not heroism, then agency and participatory significance to these women's lives. I hope to have contested the notion that the history of women in this period, and particularly in the colonial context, was somehow either subsumed in or parallel to that of men; interesting in itself, but not of particular consequence outside its own narrowly defined boundaries. Thus, I have attempted to present a different view of the 'otherness' of the Indies to the one which was dominant in the discourse of the male European élite. The New World in which these nuns lived and about which they wrote reveals other prodigies, new conundrums, and situations notably unlike the New World lived in, written about, and marvelled over by missionaries, colonisers, adventurers, and philosophers.

Throughout the thesis, I have sought to emphasise the productive power of various representations by women and men of New Spanish nuns and their convents. By this, I mean I have attempted to demonstrate how writing in the convent did not belong to an exclusively aesthetic realm without connection to colonial reality. I hope to have shown that in New Spain, just as the historical cloister changed its boundaries to accommodate a different world, the cloister represented in writing also took on new shapes. In order to do this, I have used a variety of

sources, ranging from historical writings, hagiography, personal letters, published books of a distinctly political cast, travel narratives, theoretical speculations, and material presented as evidence in the context of an Inquisition trial. My concern in basing this study on such a heterogeneous group of texts has been to attempt to maintain and explore the relationship between representational practices and other kinds of social practice.[652]

By doing this, I hope to have made apparent that writing, like other social practices in the colonies, such as the organisation of religious rituals or the imposition of certain juridical structures, both reflected the new reality and constructed it. In examining these various literary genres, I have argued that the New World was less of an imagined community (in the sense of a clearly defined and planned commonality) than an invented one; one made up on the spot and responsive to immediate demands and unavoidable circumstances. All of the genres to which the texts I examined belong have a respective 'ideal'; a rhetorically decorous and elegant form of representation supposed to embody a complementarily civilised and harmonious society. What I have demonstrated is how these ideal forms fractured and re-constituted themselves as a consequence of being subjected both to the inappropriate authorship of women and the improper environment of the New World. I also hope to have made clear that the power of this 'ideal', both in terms of representation and of social organisation, was enormous in the period, and that the changes it registers are more of the order of rallying disparate strengths and of compensating for weaknesses, rather than the sign of a radical departure from the model. The texts I have examined thus dramatise the extent to which the New World was a *bricolage* of the Old.

In the first three chapters I was interested in writing women, both within communities and individually, and in the role they played in the cultural universe of colonial society. I hope to have shown the significance of considering this specific female contribution to New Spanish culture, particularly in that crucial activity thought to be the sole preserve of the numerous male writers and institutions who were so fervidly involved in it: the self-fashioning of colonial society through the writing of its history. These chapters show vividly that the New World convent provides a space in which to examine how Old and New world forms mesh and clash, blend and dissolve. The convent was an importation from Europe which had

[652] Cf. Greenblatt (1992)6-7 "It is, I think, a theoretical mistake and a practical blunder to collapse the distinction between representation and reality, but at the same time we cannot keep them isolated from one another. They are locked in an uneasy marriage in a world without ecstatic union or divorce.".

to adapt to a new, and to all appearances unpropitious, context. These women, their communities, and the representational practices they were involved in, because of their geographical and cultural specificity - the shock of their newness - themselves partook in and undertook a radical examination of religious and cultural norms imported, of the relationship between the earthly and the divine, and of the place of the personal and the institutional. As a result, they provide an unparalleled opportunity to study not only changes of *mentalités*, but the very perception of the process of change.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, dealing with the travel narratives of nuns and with the foundation of a convent for Indian women, I attempted to demonstrate how the New World cloister became an evolving and dynamic institution, necessarily subject to, as well as initiator of, the process of change. Thus, the nuns who travelled from the Basque country to Mexico brought a new system of religious observance to the colony and organised their convent's daily routine in a manner different to that of other Mexican convents. However, the *criollo* novices who entered their cloister and the Indian and *mulato* servants employed in it brought a different experience of the routine of daily life, and a specialised knowledge of how to manage the convent's place in colonial society. These differences had to be acknowledged by the journeying nuns, and their cloister transformed accordingly, for them to be able in any sense, to 'arrive' in the New World. I identified a similar transformation in the fifth chapter, in this instance by showing how the Old World cloister was projected in a carefully adapted way, consonant with the requirements of the New World reality, in writings dealing with the foundation of a convent for Indian women. The frailties of the sex of these women and of their race were discussed in an attempt to design a cloister, or rather reinterpret the Old World cloister, in a way that would allow it to be governed and inhabited by a community of saintly and Christian but Indian women.

In this part of the thesis I hope to have made a significant contribution to the understanding of how important gender was in the period itself as a category of historical and cultural analysis, and particularly of how it furnished the nascent ethnographic writing about the Indies with a sophistication and 'density' not often acknowledged to exist in it.[653] These texts on Indian women contain many layers of meaning and rather than selectively choosing material from them considered to

[653] I have in mind here Gilbert Ryle's notion of 'thick description' as used by Clifford Geertz in a celebrated essay of the same title, in order to expand the notion of what constitutes the subject of study of ethnography. Geertz (1973).

have specific ethnographic value, I have argued that they should be considered in their entire complexity as providing this kind of account.

I hope to have shown that the varying representations of such a theoretically 'static' place as the convent are unmistakably the mark of the real; of events, of daily life, of passions, on the imaginary realm of writing. This in a sense is the 'cost' of representation - the unavoidable confrontation with the realm of social practices and the consequent loss of any rhetorical utopia - and it becomes apparent in particularly acute and intense ways thanks to the impact of the incommensurably new on these writers and on their writing practices.

In the final chapter, the subject of which was the cloister under the scrutiny of the Inquisition, my concern was once more to display the mutability of this space - in this particular case, in relation to the specific religious and political struggles of the period as well as in terms of the practices of representation. The convent on trial for heresy is clearly a different place to the cloister in hagiographic literature or, for that matter, the projected Indian nunnery; the nuns in the Inquisition being called upon to speak the language of lawyers in order to justify their lives and actions. Given that the Mexican nuns are involved in a battle absolutely analogous to that in which their founding mother, Sta. Teresa, found herself in Spain, and given that they stand accused of exactly the same doctrinal errors, the differences between the way the two historical processes are articulated are arresting. But their similarities are also startling, if predictable. Many of the nuns display considerable talent in representing and defending themselves before the Inquisition, clearly understanding what the Tribunal requires in terms of authenticity and truth. Nevertheless, when it comes to accusing each other of heresy, or even of confirming another nun's doctrinal error, the Mexican Carmelites refuse. Their refusal is an astute political action, designed to protect their community from such a horrendous charge, and it manifests itself in this unwillingness to take their representational dexterity before the Tribunal to its inevitable conclusion. Thus, while the nuns abandon hagiographic convention with apparent ease and indulge in the language of Law, when it becomes clear such juridical language will lead to serious theological charges, they withdraw from it, appealing instead to the rules of hagiographic representation in order to absolve their community.

Throughout the thesis, but particularly in this chapter, I have tried to highlight the tremendous pull of the Old upon the New, its force and vigour, as much as I have stressed what was absolutely incommensurable in the New. In this way, I hope

to have shown how change in the particular section of New Spanish culture I have studied is registered and constituted not only through the breaking up of literary and social forms imported from Europe, nor solely by their re-combination, nor even in their complete transformation, but more often by a combination of all or some of these processes. I have argued then that writings connected to the New World convent provide another way of considering the process of colonisation and the imposition of empire. The creation of New Spain was clearly an enterprise which depended on various theories of government and which, as time passed, itself caused a growing number of these writings to be produced, both justifying empire and explaining its actual management.[654] I have argued that the texts I examined also made up this literature of empire, but that what they demonstrated was not the ideological foundation, but the gestures and actions, the behaviour and emotions, also constitutive of empire and of its colonised societies.

In words which could serve as a gloss for all the social and intellectual practices which had the convent at their centre, Clara del SS. Sacramento explains why the Carmelites, once the darlings of the New Spanish Church, should have ended up before the Inquisition. She reveals the extent to which the New Spanish cloister was in and of the world, and in this particular case, how irretrievably it was submerged in mundane politics:

> *en pretender la sujeción a la obediencia de los padres Carmelitas descalzos del Carmen, valiéndose de cuantos medios humanos han podido (que quizá si hubieran dejado este negocio en la mano de Dios lo hubieran conseguido)*[655]

The much wider implications of her words serve to illustrate the main argument of my work, namely that the cloister, precisely because it was theoretically considered to be closed, once its inevitable aperture is acknowledged, proves itself to be extraordinarily revelatory of this specific historical conjuncture. Clara clearly sees a contradiction between *medios humanos* and *la mano de Dios*; one which would have been obvious to any person in the period. Obvious, and palpable - not solely a question of rhetoric, but nonetheless impossible to resolve - and particularly impossible to resolve in any of the mimetic enterprises and adventures the writing nuns and confessors of New Spain embarked on.

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654 Cf. Pagden, (1995).

655 [In their desire to be subject to the authority of the Carmelite fathers they have used all human means available (but perhaps they would have got what they wanted had they left it in the hands of God).] AGN Inq. 581 Exp. 1 f161v Clara del SS. Sacramento 18th February 1661.

In all of these narratives, the convent and its inhabitants behave as a religious institution and spiritual persons in a 'real' historical context; not as the *non lieu* appropriate to the hagiographic cloister. However much it may yearn for a rhetoric of divine direction and inspiration, the New Spanish convent is clearly at the centre of a series of human and historical relations, of petty rivalries, snobberies and emotionally charged friendships and enmities. It is with the representations ensuing from and creating such a paradox, that I have been concerned, intrigued not only by their New World specificity but also by their humanity. Throughout the thesis, in the sentimental ties that bind groups of women together in the convents, in the amazement expressed by the travelling nuns at new sights, in the confusion that confessing Indian women causes priests, in the would-be saint, Sebastiana Josepha's passionate strength of will, and in the absolute fear of heresy the Carmelites display, I have argued that the role of emotion - usually so tremendously difficult to document - reveals an interpretable historical trace.

Through the variety of sources I have drawn on and in the interdisciplinary approach I have pursued, I hope to have produced a narrative that gives voice to a particular historic personage, one of the few women to have had any voice in the colony - the New Spanish nun - restoring to this woman's speech the volume and agency it had in the unfolding drama of colonial society and arguing that this New World discourse and these New World lives (both written and lived) provide a penetrating illumination of 'how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time'.

Appendix I

CHAPTER XI

DONOR	POSITION	GIFT	OTHER
Poor man		Painting: Christ	
María de Nabarrete	Nun, *velo blanco*	Crucifix	
Conde de Fuenclara	Virrey	2 Paintings: Nra.Sra. del Pilar & St. Francis Xavier	

DONOR	POSITION	GIFT	OTHER
Conde de Fuenclara	Virrey	Crystal lamp (2,500 pesos)	
Dn. Domingo Serralde		Altar piece	Born in Vizcaya
Patrons		Gold Chalice & Plate Silver Vinegar holders & bell Monstrance Glass Cup & 2 Chalices & 2 Vinegar holders Incense burner Cross Candlesticks Priest's Gowns 4 Altar cloths Ebony chest 2 Paintings: St. Catherine & St. Bridget	Various derogatory adjectives are used of these gifts; 'meagre', 'gold - plated only', 'ordinary metal', 'artificially burnished'[656]

[656] This list of gifts comes at a point in the chronicle when relations with the patrons are at their worst.

DONOR	POSITION	GIFT	OTHER
Dn. Juan Antonio de Visarron y Iguiarreta		Relic of Holy Cross with Certificate	Probably Basque
Dn. Manuel Joseph Rubio de Salinas	Archbishop	2 Solid silver lecterns Copy of the Gospel of St John	
Dn. Pedro de Castro	previous Virrey	Necklace with *lignum crucis*	
Condesa de Revillavigedo	Virreina	Painting: St. Anthony of Padua Crystal glasses	
Lic. Fco. Antonio de Echebarri	Oidor, President Real Audiencia	Ivory, Ebony & Silver Crucifix Painting: St. Bridget	
Dn. Joaquín Arias de Vevina	Inquisitor	10 Paintings: life of Magdalen Crucifix 3 Paintings: Nativity, St. Bridget, St. Catherine	relative of Abbess
Dña. Ma. Fernández de Castro	Wife of Treasurer of New Spain	Image of St. Joseph 10 mirrors, 4 with English frames	
Dn. Manuel Joseph Rubio de Salinas	Archbishop	Monstrance	

CHAPTER XIV

DONOR	POSITION	GIFT	OTHER
Dn. Miguel Bentura Gallo de Pardiñas	Canon of Cathedral Chief Confessor	Accepts no salary Pays for building of Sacristy and Work room Gold Chalice with emeralds Altar cloth	
Dn. Fco. Ignacio de Lardisava y LLosa		Silver Candelabra	
Dña. Isabel Ma. de Vive y Sandóbal		Relic of St. Felix with Certificate	wife of above
Dña. Micaela de Sandóbal		Carpet Relic of María de Escobar	mother of above widow of Joseph de Vive, Oidor
Dña. Ma. Ana de Sn Miguel (Santoyo)	Abbess of Regina Coeli	Silver Cup Gold chalice & plate	
Dn. Andrés de Verrio y Saldivar	Priest of the archbishopric	Altar piece Crucifix 4 Paintings: St. John, St. Jerome, St. Rose of Viterbo, Abigail	
Dña. Fca. de Verrio y Saldivar		Ivory Image of Christ Child	sister of above
Dn. Castillo	Prebendary	6 Bronze Candle sticks Image of St. Michael	

Dn. Ignacio de Soria	Priest	Ebony & silver crucifix Images of Mater Dolorosa, St. John, St. Bridget, saintly virgins	
Dn. Juan de la Mota	Priest of Cathedral Sacristy	Image of Christ Child	
Josepha de Buendía		Image of Christ Child	widow of Customs Official Veracruz
Pe San Cristóbal	Jesuit Priest	Image of Christ Child with sacred heart	missionary in the Philippines
Dn. Manuel de Aldaco	Army Captain	Monstrance 14 Paintings: life of St. Bridget	

DONOR	POSITION	GIFT	OTHER
Dn. Fco. Nabrijo	Teacher at Cathedral School	Altar devoted to Crucifixion	
Dn. Manuel Muñoz de Castañeda	Merchant *Mayordomo* of Convent	Altar devoted to Virgin	
Lic. Dn. Juan del Villar	Cathedral Canon	Altar devoted to the Immaculate Conception	
Dn. Pedro de Lituriondo	Merchant	Altar devoted to the Virgin of the Rosary	
Dn. Gabriel de Rivera	Priest Chaplain of Sta. Inés	Altar devoted to St. Joseph	
Noble Indian (*Indio Cacique*)		Crucifix Paintings: 2 Stations of the Cross, Mater Dolorosa, St. John the Evangelist, burial of Christ, the Good Thief	
Noble Indian (*India Cacique*)		Paintings: Immaculate Conception & St. Joseph	widow of the above

CHAPTER XVI

DONOR	POSITION	GIFT	OTHER
María Eulalia del Corazón de Jesús	Nun	Silver Incense burner	
María Josepha de la SS. Trinidad	Nun	Chalice, Vinegar holder & bell	
Paula Josepha del SS. Sacramento	Nun	Chalice, Vinegar holder & bell	
Barbara Guadalupe de San Augustín	Nun	3 Chairs	
Benita Francisca del Sr. San Joseph	Nun	Monstrance	
Antonia Marina de la Natividad	Nun	Silver plate	
Antonia Marina de la Encarnación	Nun	Embroidery with silver thread	
Juana Rita de la Cruz	Nun	Silver cross	
Isabel Antonio de San Miguel	Nun (*velo blanco*)	Gold plated chalice	

CHAPTER XXVI

DONOR	POSITION	GIFT	OTHER
Theresa Brígida de Jesús	Abbess	Silver Tabernacle Incense burner 2 Silver lamps Crystal Cabinet for Image Painting worth 1,500 pesos	
Dn. Manuel Rubio de Salinas	Archbishop	Reliquary Image of Virgin of Guadalupe	
Marquesa de Salvatierra		Image of St. Francis	
Dña. Angela María de Baldes y Portugal		Painting: Christ's face	
Dña. Isabel de Vive y Sandóbal		Painting: St. Ann teaching daughter to read	
Hermana Barbara de Sn. Augustín	Nun (*velo blanco*)	Carpet	
Hermana Antonia de la Encarnación	Nun (*velo blanco*)	Paintings: Our Lady of the Light, the Assumption, Virgin of Guadalupe	
Dña. Peregrino Frisero		Painting	
Anonymous		Huge image of Christ	
Anonymous		Nativity	

CHAPTER XXVII

DONOR	POSITION	GIFT	OTHER
Dn. Joseph de Cuvas		Relic: drop of Christ's blood	
Dn. Cayetano Alvares	Priest of Oratory of Sn Felipe Neri	Image of Christ child as Shepherd; 7 changes of clothing for image 100 pesos for sung masses	
Dn. Juan del Villar		Ivory Crucifix Plate & Bell Chalice Italian lace Flanders lace Chambray Altar cloths	
Woman		Sculpture of Passion Painting of St. Gertrude Letter from Archbishop Palafox (framed)	friend of the Abbess
A poor washer woman (*una pobre lavandera*)		Image of Christ Child	

Appendix II

1. Poem composed during the Exercises on the Trinity, appended to L38.

Mirándote, vida mía
el corazón me enterneces,
Niño tierno y delicado
y con mil gracias que tienes,
¿es posible que tu amor
no me abrase, Dulce Dueño?
Que a tu vista bien se puede
la nieve volverse fuego.
Dime para mi consuelo
de este mal, que me atormenta,
que no lo quiero tener,
y sin él, no estoy contenta.
Es un dolor tan violento
que no lo sufre el cuerpo,
y revienta el corazón
que se sale de su centro.
Se avivan más los deseos
de verte, mi esposo ausente,
que deseo yo saber cuando será lo que espero.
¿Adónde te me has ido
y sola me has dejado?
Buscándote, amor mío,
y no te he hallado,
hasta que yo te vea
no he de tener descanso.
No tardes en venir
que te estoy deseando,
porque tu presencia me hace mucha falta
y estoy con cuidado.
Como yo te vea,
estoy consolada.
Hermosura mía,
Esposo de mi Alma,
como eres tan lindo
y de tan bella gracia,
me tienes cautiva
y aprisionada.
Si en este vivir
hago tu voluntad,
que se haga lo que gustas,
Dueño de mi libertad.
Bien sabes, dulce amor mío,
que ya no puedo más
de este deseo, que se aviva
y morir deseo ya,
si es tu voluntad.
Es tal la dulce violencia
que abrasa el corazón
con un dolor amoroso
que toda la vida me da.
Son encendidas las llamas
que abrazan el corazón
que sólo el que me lo da,
puede aliviar el dolor.
Testigos pueden ser
las lágrimas que salen,
de verme aprisionada
en esta dura cárcel.
En ternuras de amor
llorando, me he quejado,
enviándole suspiros
a mis amores,
al Dueño de mis ansias.

2. Poem to the Virgin appended to L38

Reina y Señora mía,
Madre de mi Corazón,
consuelo de mi esperanza
y mi dulcísimo amor.
Eres Purísima Madre,
que de tu virginidad
nació un Niño con mil gracias
que nos vino a liberar.
¿Qué diré de tu hermosura
tan divina y sin igual,
que los Ángeles se admiran
y te alaban sin cesar?
Me has enamorado el Alma
con tan tierna voluntad,
que de tus manos espero
todo se ha de remediar.
Líbrame de este enemigo
que no me quiere dejar,
y me tiene aborrecida
y yo a él mucho mas.
A tus bellísimas plantas,

o mejor diré azucenas,
mi corazón se rinde,
y toda mi alma te ofrezco.
Son los favores tantos,
que no tienen cuenta,
ni podrá decirlos
mi torpe lengua.
Palomita blanca,
mi Niña de perlas,
plenitud de gracia,
pasmo de belleza.

3. Poem entitled *Afectos* appended to L47

¿Si mi Dios me ha olvidado
porque le he ofendido y disgustado,
cómo puedo vivir ni hallar consuelo?
Que respirar no puedo,
que me ahogo y me falta el aliento.
Vida de mi Alma,
por quien padezco,
máteme tu amor.
Rompe lo oprimido de este duro pecho,
no así me dejes
en tan cruel tormento.
Si por tí mi Dueño,
vivo sin consuelo,
ten lástima Señor,
pues eres tan bueno
que ni un instante puedo
sufrir sin tu asistencia.
Señor, si me das licencia,
te diré mi sentimiento:
¿Por qué me tienes cautiva?
¿Qué prisiones son estas,
si ya sabes de amor
como me tienes presa?
Para un tan breve vivir
es muy corto el padecer,
que males que poco duran
glorias bien pueden ser,
y si a Dios te vas a ver,
decidle dos mil ternuras,
miradle con dulce amor,
que deseo ver su hermosura
con todo mi corazón.
Decidme, Dueño amoroso,
¿Qué es ésto que me atormenta?
Yo me espanto,
yo me admiro,
y ésto yo no lo entiendo,
que vivo y estoy muriendo.
Salid, suspiros tiernos,
de mi abrasado pecho,
y a mi bien amoroso
decidle las ansias que padezco,
que de su mano espero
todo el remedio.
Si mil Almas hubiera,
y mil vidas Dulce Amor,
con qué gusto las perdiera
y quedara deseosa
de hacer algo por tu amor.
Tú eres la vida de mi Alma
y eres mi hermoso lucero,
eres fuego que me abrasas,
sin consumirme tus llamas.
Dime, Dueño de mi Alma,
inquietud de mi sosiego,
¿Cuándo he de tener la gloria
de gozarte para siempre?
Mira que por tu amor
vivo muriendo.
¡Oh vida! como la siento
en mí, tan mal empleada
por cosas que duran poco,
y al fin, breve se acaban.
Este corazón que amante
se abrasa con tal ardor,
se queja de lo que siente,
y no dice que es amor
la causa de su dolor,
porque un Alma infiel
no merece tal favor.
Cuando por obedecer
quisiera, mi Dulce amor,
que descubriera mi pecho
qué encierra el Corazón,
aunque con mudas palabras
se sabe explicar mejor.

4. Poem appended to L16

¿Qué alivio puede caber
en quien vive padeciendo,
si el remedio de mis males
lo tendrán, sólo muriendo?
¡Oh dichosas soledades,
poblados, desiertos amados
de mi Alma! ¿Dónde hallar pudiera
lo que aquí pierdo?
¿Decidme moradores (para mi
consuelo)
si por fortuna sabéis
lo que es amar a un Dios tan bueno,
que su suave voz se oye en lo
desierto?
Decidle de mi parte lo que padezco,
que sólo con amarlo
tendré consuelo,
y así me perdone mi atrevimiento.
Bien sabes, Dueño mío,
que yo no entiendo de este amor
divino,
que mi Alma siente que todo se le
acaba
y a tí te tiene.
No me falte tu amor,
mi Hermoso Dueño,
pues sabes quede acá,
nada apetezco,
y si tú me faltaras, ni viviera.
Si de un Corazón amante
deseas saber lo que pasa,
¿Cómo es posible que sepas
su vida tan desatinada?
En un dilatado campo
matizado de flores,
que su suave fragancia
alegra los corazones.
Dulcísimo amor mío,
amoroso bien de mi Alma,
¿Qué puede darme consuelo
si padecí con tantas ansias?
Ni los campos con sus flores,
ni las aves con sus voces,
ni las riquezas del mundo
ni las músicas acordes.
Bien sabes, vida de mi alma,
lo penoso de mis males,
que padezco sin alivio,
sin saber lo que padezco.
Lo amargo de este dolor
lo siento con tanto extremo,
que me pudiera morir
pero vivo padeciendo.
La enfermedad de mi alma
el corazón me atormenta,
que ahogado dentro de mí
con Dios callando se queja.
Al silencio de la noche
descansa mi corazón,
dando tiernos suspiros
nacidos de un dulce amor.
¡Oh noches que me atormenta,
partiéndome el corazón,
la luz con que conozco
lo poco que amo a mi Dios!
Son tan vivas las ansias
que me abrazan
(¡dulce amor!)
que no se cómo lo siento,
dilo tú mi Corazón.
¿Hasta cuándo, Alma mía,
estaré en esta prisión
de esta bajeza del cuerpo
que me priva de mi Dios?
¡Oh mi Padre y mi Señor!
dadme de tus grandezas,
que pobre de ellas estoy,
mis quejas son excusadas
que nada es lo que padezco,
y si algo padeciera,
fuera muy de razón.
Al silencio de la noche
me despiertan sus horrores,
dándome aliento y luz
para padecer conforme.
Corazón mío, suspira,
no te ahogues, respira,
que si el sentir te mata,
te dará vida.
Mi Enamorado Esposo,
lindo de mi corazón,
hermosura de mi Alma,
ábraseme tu amor.
Mira que lo deseo, sí,
que el corazón se sale de mí,
por estar en tí.
Dueño mío, ¿cómo puedo sufrir
estar en esta vida fuera de tí?

Y si me faltas, no puedo vivir
sin dejar de morir.
¿Qué tienes, corazón mío,
por qué te quejas?
¡Oh Jesús amoroso, mira! No sientas
que es dulce el padecer, y es
cosa buena
que dá la vida, aunque te mueras.
¿De qué se sirve la vida
cuando no saco ganancia
de la hacienda poderosa,
de admirables tesoros
que dá Dios a las Almas?

5. Poem to a Confessor

Muy propio de la tristeza
es el sentir y callar.
Penas que matan mi Alma
y ellas la vida le dan.
Si por amarnos, Señor,
padece mi corazón,
no se extiendan, vida mía,
a tanto que mi sentir me prive de la
razón.
Siento el mal trato de mi Padre,
y con tanta confusión,
que me imagino perdida
por dar yo la [porción].
Y como siendo cordero,
le temo como a León
pienso que me aborrece
y con muy justa razón,
que cosas que dan trabajo
pocos gustan su amargor.
Bien sabes, Dueño mío,
lo que siento dar que hacer,
que aveces lo que padezco
no me lo da a conocer.
Dulce Jesús de mi Alma,
vida de mi corazón,
remedia todos mis males,
y que no te ofenda yo.
Avergonzada y corrida
quedé con lo que sentí,
que buscando el alivio,
penada sin él, salí.
Al Padre que me confiesa
dale mucho de tu amor,
para que pueda sufrir
el trabajo que le doy,
y a mi dámelo todo,
como pobre que estoy
de todas las virtudes
y de tu Divino amor.

Appendix III

HISTORIA VOL. 109 EXP. 2 FF. 8-56 (1723) DILIGENCIAS EJECUTADAS EN VIRTUD DE LA REAL CÉDULA DE SU MAJESTAD SOBRE LA LICENCIA PEDIDA POR EL EXCELMO. SR. MARQUÉS DE BALERO, VIRREY Y GOBERNADOR Y CAPITÁN GENERAL QUE FUÉ DE ESTE REINO PARA LA FUNDACIÓN DE UN CONVENTO PARA RELIGIOSAS DE SAN FCO. EN ESTA CIUDAD.[657]

Ignacio García Figueroa

[ ] que se procure la conservación de las casas en donde se les enseña a las niñas, no sólo la vida espiritual sino la política, por parecerle a su Majestad necesaria dicha conservación porque es obra piadosa e importante al servicio de Dios y bien de estas Provincias, por lo cual manda su Majestad que donde no hubiese dichas casas se fundasen, y fundadas, se conserven. [Obra] muy bien como tan Católica, que mucho más necesario e importante al servicio de Dios y bien de estas provincias será la fundación del Convento de Descalzas para las Indias Nobles.

Fr. Felipe de Abarca

[ ] sobre si las Indias naturales de esta Provincia son aptas, capaces y suficientes para obtener el estado de religiosas. Por la experiencia que el ministerio de cura de esta parroquia de San Sebastián de esta dicha ciudad del orden de N. P. San Agustín [ ] hallo por el manejo y conocimiento en sus naturales son hábiles y que inclinándose a aprender cualquier cosa, la emprenden con mucha facilidad y se inclinan a la virtud; y que con gran gusto pasarán la estrechez de cualquiera religión: que no las hará fuerza la descalcez por estar habituadas a padecerla desde su niñez; su continuo ayuno porque de ordinario su mantenimiento es una cosa muy común aunque en su naturaleza hoy en día están muy despiertas a inclinarse a lo que las quieren dirigir; porque en siendo legítimamente hijas de padres Indios sin mezcla de otra calidad, son sumamente timoratas y de una docilidad sin doblez, en estos términos doy de sentir el que la Católica y real persona de su Majestad les comunique tan santo bien.

Diego de Moza

[ ] no hallo que esta fundación pueda tener inconveniencia alguna, ni al Rey [...] ni al reino, ni a esta ciudad. Antes sí, me parece ser de mucha utilidad, porque las Indias caciques y principales podrán tener sin los estorbos del siglo la perfección de la vida religiosa, pues por la comunicación que he tenido de sus espíritus me consta el que muchas no adelantan en la perfección, guardando su virginidad, por no tener un monasterio en donde poder libre y espontáneamente entrarse. Pues tengo experiencia el que muchas Indias principales, por conservarse vírgenes y por no tener para esto ningún convento en donde siendo religiosas conservarse vírgenes, se han entrado muchas con título de mozas (como se puede ver en todos los conventos de esta ciudad) a servir a las religiosas con fin sólo de servir a Dios en ellos, consagrándole su virginidad, porque aunque los más de los Indios son inclinados a lo malo, casi todas las Indias son a lo bueno y virtuoso inclinadas, y así

[657] I have modernised both the spelling and punctuation for ease of reading. Illegible sections are denoted by square brackets: [ ]. The numbering of folios follows the original, which is extremely erratic.

discurro que de la fundación de este convento vendrá muchísimas utilidades a las sobre dichas almas, a este Reino y a esta ciudad de México, con especialidad a las almas porque mejoran de vida más perfecta y mística al Reino, porque tendrá quien [ ] santamente con vida inmaculada, logrando a Dios por él, a esta ciudad de México porque tendrá en él [sic] quien ejercer su Magnanimidad, y quien reparte a tanto a comer ampliamente como esta nobilísima ciudad de México, poca fuerza hará el que se agregue un comedor más.

Antonio Pérez

[ ] según la experiencia, trato y práctica en el manejo de los naturales [ ]

[ ] cuando intentó el Rey soberano del cielo y tierra fundar en dichos corazones su santa ley para las obras insignes de su propagación en el heroico acto de religión de la abnegación de dicha voluntad nos pone por San Lucas una misteriosa parábola de un linaje, que con el convite de unas bodas cita a los actos [ ] de religión cristiana, excúsanse los mas al [ ] magnífico del convite, instan como misericordioso Rey, a que se adjunten y los unos con terrenas ocupaciones no quieren gozar de tan excelente bien. Señor, ya están todas las nacionales convocadas para ser religiosas [ ] ya está todo prevenido [ ] sólo falta la licencia.

Que son las nacionales de este septentrional de Nueva España (hablando en lo genérico de ellas) muy pobres, muy humildes, muy recogidas y muy cortas de espíritu. Pues por su pusilanimidad no se atreven a emprender empresas admirables, siendo su mayor deuda la omisión - hija de la cortedad de ánimo. Pero no careciendo, por éso, de ser sujetos muy capaces, idóneos y aplicados, para cualesquiera obras espirituales como lo experimentamos en los temporales cargos, y no siendo ésta su aplicación de estos nuestros tiempos, porque leyendo en el R. P. Fr. Juan Bautista, religioso [ ] en que trata de la aplicación e idoneidad de los Indios, virtud y letras en los que estudiaron y se enseñaron en este Colegio Real de Sta. Cruz, fundado en esta parroquia de Tlatelolco, que hasta hoy duran sus edificios aunque se acabó la práctica. Por haberse fundado el colegio seminario, y ver y leer las cartas latinas, con tanta elegancia y propiedad, que parecen elocuentes [ ] siendo muy observantes Católicos y religiosos cristianos, y en todas sus operaciones verdaderos levíticos por el cultivo que tuvieron de dichos primeros religiosos en el ejercicio de letras, ayudándoles a exponer la sagrada escritura.

[ ] y si así recién convertidos producía el fruto contemplativo, V. R., hoy en día, ¿qué tales estarán con más frecuencia, con más maestros, con mayor práctica y trato con los Españoles? La posición illativa [sic] es ésta a que respondo, que los que se aplican son buenos, de que tengo sobrada experiencia. Hartaba y confundía mi espíritu el alabar a las mas [ ] y el atender a la definición en la natural inclinación del sexo femenino. [ ] Menos mala es la frialdad del hombre que la bobedad de la mujer. General es la proposición, pero como no hay regla sin excepción [...]. están completas las historias de varoniles Mujeres que excedieron en santidad, virtud y fortaleza a la mayor parte del hombre, dedicando sus vidas por víctimas de su alma, ofrecían firmes sus cuerpos a lo fuerte de una clausura, a lo duro de un cuchillo, de fogoso de las llamas por no declinar contra su dueño y siendo ésto así como es, son excepción de la regla las buenas, pues con la Gracia de Dios no hay imposibles. [ ]

[ ] asiento por asumpto [sic] y siento por conclusión, que son las naturales (según las sujetos [sic]) muy idóneos y capaces para entrar y profesar en religión, por su

naturaleza constante en sus propósitos, muy observantes en las tradiciones en que las pusieron en la nueva conversión, teniendo por practicar por lo firme del ánimo que son, que en diciendo en su idioma *zemicacuilique*, que quiere decir *ha sido costumbre*, no los contrastara todo el mundo, viviendo como viven, en el santo temor de Dios, de donde infiero son sujetos capaces para el voto solemne de la religión.

[ ] dice el Bienaventurado Sto. Tomás, Duns Scotus, Ricardo Durando, Bonaina [sic] citados por el Lic. Villalobos, que el voto de religión que se hace a Dios por promesa mejor que su contrario [ ] hablando con la práctica de cura maestro de Indias en la experiencia de diez y siete años de administración, digo que entre uno y otro sexo, siendo ellos buenos, son mejores ellas por ser más humildes. Más pobres, más recogidas, más trabajadoras, pues las que casadas son, me consta generalmente hablando, que del sudor y trabajo de su rostro, mantienen, sustentan, visten y cuidan a sus esposos, y que muertos ellos son tan fieles y constantes que sucede en la práctica interior de la confesión, examinándolas por el estado [ ] han tenido alguna distracción, como hijas del frágil barro del Damasceno campo, a que en su idioma me han respondido; *Ay muy amado Padre mío, no lo quería Dios que yo lo ofenda, ni al mi marido [sic] le quebrante su palabra, pues cuando nos juntamos le dí palabra a la purísima y siempre doncella María Santísima de no juntarme con otro, y hasta hoy le tengo amor, a Dios primero y a mi marido muerto.*

Las que son doncellas guardan las tradiciones hebreas de no irse con los hombres, de ayunar los sábados, sin obligarles, pareciéndoles ser pecado. [...] Habiéndoles, pues, enseñado el ayuno natural (que es necesario para recibir el eucarístico sacramento) me consta de su observancia que les dura el ayuno cuarenta horas, comiendo la víspera a medio día hasta las cinco o las seis de la tarde del día que han reservado al Divino sacramento. No prueban bocado, ni ese día comen carne, sólo beben un poco de chocolate, cosa que en todo el año no prueban, y las que por necesidad de preñez, enfermedad o sed, la tarde o noche antes de comulgar comieron pan o tortilla o bebieron agua, en la reconciliación lo confiesan por culpa, preguntando ¿Podré comulgar? Porque anoche o ayer tarde, me lo moría por agua o me lo moría por comer. No haciendo esto por ignorancia, sino del Santo temor de Dios que tienen, la gran reverencia con que preparan sus cuerpos para comulgar siendo tal, que ese día con ninguno hablan, estándose en la iglesia hasta las doce, por lejos que vivan, con los ojos bajos, los brazos cruzados, de uno en uno sin hablar unos con otros como tengo dicho, poniendo en las entrecalles, uno sahumadores con lumbre, incienso o copal, saliendo otros de las casillas con los mismos instrumentos a perfumarles los pechos, por las especies que acaban de servir. ¡Oh fe santa! ¿Oh santo Dios! Y cómo se engrandece tu gloria entre estos miserables, pues cogieron con tanto amor tu ley que ellas principalmente son las primeras en las doctrinas, en las cuentas, en las congregaciones, en la misa y en acudir al cumplimiento de cristianas. Muy fieles en su obligación, y en esto sólo con el continuo cultivo de la doctrina cristiana [...] Luego razón será por útil a sus almas, bien a su república, y consuelo espiritual suyo, el que se les conceda el ingreso en clausura, porque si sólo con el ejercicio de la doctrina cristiana viven como vemos ¿qué se aguarda de su constancia, fidelidad y firmeza en que siempre viven, cultivadas con la oración, meditación y contemplación con que se ejercitan en los monasterios? ¿Qué se aguarda? Un catálogo de santas. Ojalá la publique la fama para que en tiempo de nuestro Felipe bajen la cerviz las glorias de Macedonia y se eleven y sublimen las de España.

V. M. me perdone lo [lato] de mis toscos borrones y présteme paciencia, que a quien es fuerza que le respondan, por no dejar escrúpulo en que tropezar ni instancia que no alcance en algún modo a responder. Cinco condiciones ponen los teólogos para lo formal del voto solemne de religión: que sea voluntario, de sujeto capaz, que se haga a Dios, que sea libre, y que sea mejor que su contrario; todos por experiencia sabemos concurrir en un racional, pero quiero sepa V. A. cuántas son cinco en las Indias. Es doctrina de San Agustín con todos los teólogos que para merecer o desmerecer se requiere el acto voluntario, teniendo éste todo su principio intrínseco en el conocimiento del fin. [ ] que aunque con decir que era[n] racionales era suficiente, lo traigo por necesario, porque dicen que los Indios son inconstantes en sus dictámenes y pareceres, de donde se infiere el no ser firmes en lo voluntario. A lo cual respondo que en lo que toca a las operaciones externas es verdad, en las internas es falso, pues en el santo sacramento del matrimonio se experimenta la prueba, siendo el voluntario según el concilio *conditio sine qua non* luego no carecen de él para el ingreso en la religión. Son libres; esta condición dice Cristo, citado por Hugo Cabello, que es de dos maneras; la libertad de contrariedad y contradicción, porque aunque algunos dicen que lo mismo es libre que voluntario, estando en tal sentencia, habiendo probado lo voluntario, se infiere lo libre. Hay otra libertad que procede de servidumbre y ésta es de dos maneras, como dice mi Sr. Duns Scotus [ ] ley natural, todos nacen libres, de la cual no hablo, sólo de la legal y según lo dicho se infiere que las Indias tienen la dicha servidumbre legal y teniéndola no pueden entrar en religión. [ ] cesando el tributo, o esas la contribución [sic] cesando la contribución, fuerza es se disminuya la Real Hacienda porque aunque ellas no pagaran, perdiera el Rey el derecho a la especie que se disminuye; luego, según ésto no pueden ser religiosas supuesto que no son libres [ ]

[ ] enclaustradas las Indias se disminuye la especie en la prole, que es contra la Real Hacienda, luego no pueden hacer voto, por tener la servidumbre legal y no tener la libertad necesaria para el cumplimiento del voto. Consta también del Sr. Duns Scotus [ ] luego, según lo dicho, se infiere que el esclavo puede hacer voto, ésto es el que lo es *secundum* etc. Fuera que el legislador que impone la ley la puede relajar según su voluntad, como consta de la menor, que puede el siervo con licencia de su dueño hacer voto de religión; luego siendo serviles a su Majestad puede ampliar este favor y concederles siendo sus siervos legales. [ ] la merced para que puedan en religión, para que sean sujetos capaces de profesar en ella, siguiéndose de ello el servicio a Dios Nuestro Señor y bien a sus almas, cuando lo vemos cumplido en los varones, en los caciques y señores sacerdotes como favor y merced que hizo la Real Corona [ ]

Que sea la condición del voto promesa de Dios, deduzco lo que tengo dicho del Santo temor de Dios, viviendo en él como viven, que aunque dicen ser gente sin temor, honor y vergüenza [...] no siendo cierto lo que el vulgo dice en todos, que viven sin vergüenza y sin temor, constándome a mi como su ministro lo contrario, teniendo en esta mi feligresía indias muy honradas y temerosas de ambas Majestades.

La última condición es que el voto que se hiciese, sea mejor que su contrario, y siendo mejor el acto de religión que el de matrimonio por lo anexo del voto de castidad luego, es mejor el acto de religión que el de matrimonio, que aunque San Pablo dice [ ] tengo por cierto que la que pudiera vivir en la continencia sea religiosa. Insta el discurso, que cómo podrán observar, mantener y tener en el ingreso de la religión el voto de castidad, razón que me desvelado por ser esta nación tan cálida. Y para descargo de mi conciencia, en lo que toca en lo exterior,

consulté varios doctores acerca del calor de los Indios, diciendo ser calientes por naturaleza, no de natural, siendo de sanguíneo humor. [ ] luego, según ésto, no le obsta a las naturales de esta región el ingreso en el acto heroico de religión. Pruebo prácticamente todo lo dicho en los actos interiores del sacramento de la penitencia, y digo que no son muy frecuentes en esta culpa. Porque aunque por pecado generalmente se toma toda maldad, a los Indios les parece que sólo es pecado el que se comete carnalmente, y sólo a este le dicen *tlatlacole*, que quiere decir pecado. Y exortándoles en su idioma a que si tienen otro pecado que confesar, vuelven muy fervorosas y dicen *No lo quiera Dios, que no lo he cometido ni quiero cometer.* Y así digo que aunque son de naturaleza cálida, son muy puras y muy castas, pues lo continuo es el no caer en tal culpa. Pues confesándolas continuamente, infinitas y sin número son las que en tal culpa no han caído. Siendo verdad ésta, que reservo para el tribunal de Dios, luego por su naturaleza cálida, no les impide el voto de castidad. No las quiero hacer tan puras que no carezcan de tribulaciones [ ] Pruebo aparente [sic] el que no les impida su cálida naturaleza el voto de castidad.

En esta jurisdicción de Santiago de Tlatelolco hay muchísimas congregantes del colegio de San Gregorio, con la advocación de Nuestra Señora de Loreto, que con grande esmero y celo tienen los muy reverendos Padres de la Compañía de Jesús, en que las más congregantes son doncellas habiendo hecho voto de castidad, promesa Dios Nuestro Sr. mediante la Purísima María del Loreto, mi señora, viviendo éstas tan abstraídas de lo mundano en las casillas de sus moradas que parecen no haber tales niñas en su edad - mucha compostura, en el hablar modestia y en su voluntad mucha obediencia, que aún estando en el siglo confundirán a las más observantes religiosas. Siendo su número de más de sesenta las de mi jurisdicción y su edad que la menor no llega a los veinte, pasando hasta los cuarenta, cosa que aunque me sirve de descanso al verlas, me aumenta la confusión a mi estado el ver unas niñas que, sin obligación a la mayor perfección, estén con gran perfección.

Comúnmente hablando, son tenidos los naturales por muy ebrios, siendo este vicio raíz de muchas maldades, que hablo en él con grandísima distinción. Porque aunque en la gentilidad de estos naturales se castigaba este vicio con pena de la vida y a la hembra que borracha apresaban la infamaban con toda su descendencia, y siendo hoy cierto en su cristianismo lo desenfrenado con que viven por este vicio, ellas de ninguna manera lo beben, constándome en su vida interior que la que por necesidad, preñez o enfermedad ha bebido, se acusa de ello en la confesión con gran multitud de lágrimas como si hubiera cometido un grandísimo pecado. Háme sucedido el reprender a algunas casadas por haber visto alguna frecuencia en la embriaguez y responder el no ser culpa suya sino violencia de algunos imprudentes maridos que han salido llevar [sic] a la taberna, con empujones, puñadas y violencia. Luego, aunque el vulgo las tenga por ebrias, a mí como su pastor me consta el no serlos, luego no es condición que les pueda impedir el voto de religión. Y así soy de parecer mirando lo que veo, el que son sujetos capaces para hacer voto solemne de religión por hallar en ellas, como con exación [sic] hallan las cinco condiciones para lo formal del voto de religión. Siendo recogidas por su naturaleza, no tendrán demérito en la clausura. Muy obedientes a sus padres espirituales y en especial (puedo decir) a mí, que las administro con que serán observantes en el voto de la obediencia. Muy pobres, porque aunque algunas lo han por naturaleza, por ser miserables, de otras me consta lo son de espíritu, porque aunque sus padres tengan caudal ni se componen, visten y aliñan ni lo desean porque lo tienen por vanidad, salvo el día que han de recibir el

sacramentado Santo Cuerpo de Jesú Cristo, que entonces se ponen lo mejor que tienen. Luego no serán transgresoras del voto de pobreza. Son puras y castas como lo tengo patentemente probado, luego según todo lo alegado y probado, hallo sea muy conveniente y útil para el servicio de Dios.

Otro sí que me puede objetar, el que son hábiles para las cosas mecánicas y en experimentando en varias niñas que quieren ser religiosas como se han aplicado a leer y escribir latín, como consta por una carta que tengo de la M. R. M. Sor Petra de San Francisco, religiosa del convento de San Juan de la Penitencia, ex-abadesa conocida más por su virtud que por su oficio, teniendo a gran vanidad sus letras en que merecía fama la grande idoneidad de todas; constándome a mí de algunas que mejor leen el latín que hablan su idioma natural y según todo lo dicho, suplico a Vuestra Merced se sirva de informar a mi Rey y Sr. lo necesario que es para el bien de sus almas, de la República y servicio que a Dios Nuestro Señor se hace - porque en algún modo le desagravie esta nación - ofreciéndose estas niñas, a ser cándidas azucenas en el claustro de la Iglesia, ofreciéndose así por las muchas que en su antigüedad al demonio sacrificaban, pues refieren las antiguas historias que en este pueblo de Tlatelolco, que quiere decir montocillo de arena, adoraban al ídolo Huichilopostli con tanta ceguedad y crueldad que de año a año se numeraban más de trescientas doncellas, sacándolas vivas el corazón por las espaldas, con cuya sangre victimaban a su falso Dios. Pues ahora Señor, salga el corazón por la boca, prometiendo a Dios sus almas, para desagraviar las ofensas de sus ciegos antepasados. Este es mi parecer. Colegio y Parroquia de S. Iago de Tlateloclo. 13 de mayo de 1723.

Manuel Pérez

Mándeme V. A. le informe qué inconveniencias o conveniencias pueden seguir de la nueva erección del convento de religiosas [ ] que se ha labrado junto a la alameda de esta ciudad para Indias caciques que quieran tomar el hábito. Por razón de la experiencia que me asiste de la naturaleza, propiedades, costumbres de las indias y obedeciendo tan [ ] digo:

Lo primero, que no sólo no le hallo inconveniente para que las Indias puedan ser religiosas, pero le hallo muchas utilidades. Que no tenga inconveniente consta porque el que pudiera haber (y es el que se pretexta para pedir ese informe) es lo rudo de su naturaleza y la inconveniencia que en ella se infiere. A lo primero digo que más difícil y más perfecto es el estado de sacerdocio que el de la monja y estámoslo en lo muchos indios en esta ciudad, sacerdotes y muy perfectos, luego en su proporción, no estorba su [ ] a ellas para los menos que en efecto que el sacerdocio, pues a ellos no se les estorba ser sacerdotes [ ]

Lo segundo, que tan no es vileza la que se les nota que en esta jurisdicción de San Pablo tengo dos de las que están ya admitida para dicho convento que a la fecha de ésta saben rezar ya el oficio divino que me consta; luego no es su vileza tanto como se quisiera ponderar por quien quisiera impedirles este bien.

Lo tercero, en ellos lo más de su vileza depende de su malicia [ ] del vicio de la embriaguez a que están connaturalizados y vemos que muchos de ellos lo deponen [ ] que llegan al estado de sacerdotes, y la experiencia de veinte y siete años me lo ha mostrado que en este vicio en que ellos son tan fáciles y que éste usa de su vileza, ellas son tan no fáciles, puede decir que [por] doscientos indios suele embriagarse una, y esta una nunca es de las doncellas, porque éste no es caso [ ]

verlas ebrias y habiendo de ser de este estado las que se eligen para religiosas, por ningún modo puede temerse la embriaguez. Luego ni por ese comino que de no dárseles [ ] rudeza que estorbe dicho fin.

Lo cuarto, el recién conquistado este reino estando ellos tan toscos y rudos como se deja entender, tanto que hubo de expedir una bula el Sr. Paulo V en que mandó los tuviesen por racionales, que era porque llegaron muchos a dudar si lo eran, y entonces dice el Doctísimo Padre Fray Juan Bautista de la religión de mi R. P. San Francisco, en el como de ser monjes [advierto] que en el colegio de Sta. Cruz (hoy es Santiago de Tlatelolco) había indios que llegaron a saber perfectísimamente latín y a ser muy doctos después de doscientos años de cultivo y mucho más los de esta ciudad con el mucho comercio de Españoles, ¿por qué no creeremos que hayan ya desterrado su natural ignorancia y rudeza? Y si ellos la han desterrado siendo (como es cierto) más inclinados que ellas a embriaguez y a otros muchos vicios, ¿por qué no creeremos que ellas, que no son tan inclinadas, tengan menos rudeza y mucha habilidad?

Lo segundo que puede pretextarse es su inconstancia o poca perseverancia, y si es ésto, no tome el hábito en ningún convento ninguna española, pues hemos visto muchas que han salídose en el año de la aprobación o noviciado; porque no debe reputarse inconstancia de la India que se saliere pues no se reputa de muchas españolas que se salen. Digo más, que aún más debiera temerse esta poca perseverancia de las Españolas que de las Indias. Para ésto hay todas estas razones: la primera, que el no perseverar, si era porque extrañaran en el convento la falta del regalo del siglo, las Españolas por pobres que sean tienen sin comparación más regalo en sus casas que las Indias aunque éstas sean ricas, porque las Indias rara es la que come pan sino tortilla, carnero muy pocas; gallina aunque tengan muchas en sus coradillos [sic] jamás las prueban, chocolate es muy difícil sino sólo su bebida de atole. Luego, si vemos que muchas Españolas perseveran y profesan en conventos de instituto muy estrechos sin echar menos el regalo de sus casas, las Indias que no tienen regalo que echar menos, ¿cómo no perseverarán?

La segunda razón si el no perseverar es por lo rígido de la clausura, más clausura tienen las Indias (mayormente las doncellas) que las más encerradas españolas porque me consta que se suelen (si no hay permiso a qué salir) estar dos y tres y más días sin salir de sus casas, sin haber hecho voto de clausura pues éstas ven a lo que entran es a estar encerradas como las religiosas que en otros conventos, ¿por qué negaremos que pueden hacer el ánimo pues ven que tan religiosas han de ser éstas como las que ven en los demás conventos?

Mírase (que ya yo lo he oído) que ¿qué entienden ellas el voto solemne de castidad, pobreza, obediencia y clausura? Respondo dos cosas; la una que ¿qué entienden ellos, o qué entendían de los demás misterios de nuestra santa fe? Y no obstante se les ha explicado por los ministros evangélicos y ya en su [ ] lo perciben (que ésto es innegable) luego con la explicación podrán percibirlo. Lo segundo, que yo conozco Indias que en el modo que pueden percibir y explicarme, han hecho voto de perseverar doncellas y no casarse, y mostraré en caso necesario Indias de dicha jurisdicción, doncellas viejas que nunca se han casado; luego, si sin el cultivo y explicación de lo que es voto hacen ésto, con su explicación, harán aquello.

Por último Sr., yo no hallo inconveniente alguna en dicha erección, antes sí la utilidad del bien que a muchas de ellas se les hará, pues si es cierto que muchas

son malas o no son muy buenas, es porque no han tenido esta ocasión que ahora se les ha ofrecido y lo que muchos dirán que es inconveniente, no es sino no estar en uso. Pero las cosas, mucho más las buenas, merecen principio; puesto lo que en el mundo hay bueno algún principio parecía difícil y hoy está ya fácil. Sólo lo hacerlo y [ ] proseguirlo.

Además que ellas son por su naturaleza humildes, obsequiosas y trabajadoras, y creo que estas tres cosas y las demás virtudes las conservarán con gran facilidad. Esto es lo que según la experiencia me ha enseñado puedo decir de tan buenas obras, que creo que será muy del servicio del Sr., salvo se puede tener otro motivo que yo no lo alcance, porque aún el de que no puedan guardar el voto de la castidad, que es el que pudiera pretextarse, según mi larga experiencia es para ellas el más fácil, pues en el fuero sacramental doy gracias a Dios de ver lo difícil que son en su fracción, y no sólo difícil pero las más de las doncellas, aunque tengan ya edad capaz de malicia, parecen incapaz de inpuridad [sic]; con que por camino alguno yo no hallo inconveniente en el que han de ser muy perfectas religiosas y que sea el convento que se ha erigido en pocos años un emporio de virtudes. Esto es lo que me parece. V. A. determinará y mandará como siempre lo mejor.

Joseph de Valderrama

Predicador general jubilado y vicario de este convento de SS. RR. de San Juan de la Penitencia, testifico que habiendo llamado a las religiosas más antiguas de él para informarme si sabían si en dicho convento hubiera habido algunas Indias sirvientes o donadas que hubieran vivido con ejemplar vida de virtud (para concurrir así para ciertas diligencias), examiné con todo cuidado a la R. M. Nicolasa de San Antonio y a la R. M. Teresa de la Encarnación, una y otra de las primeras religiosas ejemplares de este convento, las cuales aseguran haber conocido en el convento que a él vinieron desde niñas y en él murieron y acabaron con edificación de la comunidad, las Indias siguientes; Beatríz de San Pedro a quien aseguran que, habiéndole caído encima tres techos se le apareció San Antonio y milagrosamente la libró.[siguen 13 nombres ilegibles].

Joseph María de Guevarra

Mándame V. A. que dé mi parecer y diga lo que siento en orden de la fundación que se pretende de un convento de religiosas de San Francisco donde solamente han de ser admitidas las Indias Principales de esta Nueva España, y obedeciendo con todo rendimiento a este mandato, digo delante a Dios y con la verdad que pide cosa de tan tanta importancia, que juzgo que de ninguna manera es conveniente se conceda licencia para tal fundación; porque ésta no será de especial utilidad para el bien espiritual de sus almas, ni en este modo de vida se adelantarán más en la virtud, que es todo lo que únicamente se puede pretender. Para probar esto supongo: lo primero, como asientan todos los Doctores, que hablando según la providencia ordinaria del modo con que Dios gobierna a sus criaturas, aún en el orden de su gracia, es dándoles aquellas prendas naturales, suaves inclinaciones, y talentos necesarios con que puedan ellas mismas conseguir los fines sobrenaturales que su Majestad pretende, y con éso, sin quitarles la libertad consigue *suaviter et fortiter* los fines sobrenaturales que acerca de ellas tiene predefinidos; y así vemos, que aún entre los mismos que siguen el camino de la virtud, que ellos que son de espíritus

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pusilánimes, sólo son buenos y virtuosos respecto de sí mismos, y aquellos que tienen ánimos generosos y resueltos, no sólo son buenos para sí mismos sino que procuran con todo esfuerzo hacer virtuosos a los demás.

Supongo lo segundo, que es principio asentado entre los Doctores Místicos, que el Padre espiritual ha de dirigir y encaminar a sus hijos espirituales sólo por aquel camino por donde Dios Ntro. Sr. los dirige y encamina, y no por otro; y así dicen que aunque es muy perfecta la oración mental que la vocal, con todo éso, si el Padre espiritual conoce que alguno de sus hijos aprovecha más con el ejercicio de la oración vocal que con el de la mental; en aquella y no en ésta lo debe ejercitar. Si otro aprovecha más con la lección espiritual que con la meditación, debe mandarle que se ejercite más en la dicha lección espiritual, que no en la meditación, porque aunque una cosa sea en sí misma más perfecta que otra, respecto de algunas personas es más provechosa la menos perfecta, entonces para dicha persona, ésta es mejor que la más perfecta. Lo mismo asientan todos hablando del estado a que Dios llama a las almas en orden a conseguir su eterna salvación, que aunque es cierto que hay una religiones más perfectas que otras, por los fines más altos que profesan, con todo éso, si Dios llama a una persona con santas inspiraciones y especiales motivos a alguna religión, aunque no sea de las que profesan más alta perfección, en ésa debe entrar, y no en otra; en ésa será más perfecto que en otra, y ésa será la mejor para él, según la suavidad de la divina providencia. Bien sabido es que por la Sta. Cruz se entiende el camino por donde hemos de andar, hasta conseguir nuestra salvación y hablando Cristo vida nuestra, del modo con que le hemos de seguir por este camino para conseguir la perfección dice, *qui vult venire post me abneget semetipsum tollat curcen suam, et sequatur me.* No dice que cojamos cualquiera cruz, sino cada uno la suya, cada uno aquella que Dios le ha puesto, cada uno aquella por donde Dios lo llama; porque aunque hay otras Cruces más gloriosas por ser más pesadas, esto es de mayor mortificación y más alta perfección, no quiere Dios que cargue cada uno sino la suya. Las otras tiene Dios prevenidas para hombros más fuertes y el que fuera caminante

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bien [sic] con la suya más ligera, y así llegará con ella hasta el término, se cansaría sin duda con la más pesada, y se rindiera en el camino antes de acabarlo, por ser peso sobre sus fuerzas.

Supongo lo tercero, que no sólo la mayor parte de los naturales de este reino, sino casi todos, tienen una condición muy inconstante, y una voluntad muy variable. Esta es una de las faltas más connaturales de esta nación, y aunque esto es bien conocido de todos los que los han tratado algún tiempo; yo lo pruebo con la experiencia que tengo. Más ha de diez y seis años que me he ejercitado en ayudar a todos los Indios de esta ciudad y sus contornos y otros muchos de bien lejos, en confesarlos, y ésto de continuo todos los días del año; y esta falta ha sido siempre la que más les ha embarazado, según lo que tengo observado, el que perseveren algún tiempo en la virtud. Mas, bien sabido es, que ofreciéndose muchas veces en esta ciudad a las otras señoras religiosas de otros conventos una criada que les sirva, y buscándose ésta aún entre las Indias que parecen mejores y de más buenas inclinaciones, a pocos días se salen las más, y es rarísima la que persevera bastante tiempo. Y esto sucede de ordinario aún con aquellas que acá fuera vivían

en gran miseria, pobreza y maltratamiento de sus parientes y allá en los claustros religiosos lo pasaban con gran conveniencia, notable y diferente trato del que acá les daban los suyos. Por cualquiera disgustillo se arrepienten de haber entrado y después apenas han salido, se arrepienten de haber salido y así suelen andar entrando y saliendo en varios conventos. Bien se probó esta mutabilidad en una de las que pretendían ser recibidas en el nuevo convento que se pretende fundar; porque ésta no sólo ha tomado y a la hora de ésta, otro estado (lo cual no me hace tanta fuerza, que quizá lo ha hecho porque se ha dilatado mucho tiempo la licencia que se procura) sino que, aún muy a los principios de su pretensión, y teniendo ya el nombramiento para ser admitida a su tiempo, y mostrando por entonces grandes deseos de conseguirlo. El que gobernaba su alma, la puso en casa de un señora muy virtuosa y recogida, para que allí se fuera ensalando [sic] al modo de vida que después había de observar y a muy pocos días, no pudiendo guardar tanto recogimiento, ni atarearse a los ejercicios devotos que la dicha Señora le enseñaba, se volvió a su propia casa.

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Supongo lo cuarto, que estos pobres Naturales tienen muy corto entendimiento. Este supuesto lo conocerá cualquiera que hubiere tratado con ellos y el que tratare más y más tiempo con ellos, cada día lo conocerá mejor. Verdad es que algunos demuestran grande habilidad, aprendiendo los más oficios mecánicos con facilidad, y muy de presto; y por esto se engañan muchos teniéndoles por muy hábiles. Pero ¿quién negará que todas estas obras mecánicas no las suelen acertar de ordinario sin teniendo algún ejemplar, por donde copiarlas? Y cuando las hacen por sí solos, las echan a perder las más veces. En la pintura, que es una de las artes que más se parecen a las ciencias, ¿quién hay que se señale con notables ventajas y perfección, habiendo entre ellos tantos pintores? Y fuera de esto, en las facultades que necesariamente se requiere buen entendimiento, como son la Gramática, y las otras ciencias de Filosofía y Teología, habiéndose aplicado tantos a cursarlos, ¿han mostrado por ventura esta facilidad y presteza en conseguirlas? ¿Cuántos después de muchos años que han corrido por los campos literarios, aspirando a ser curas de sus pueblos se han vuelto a ello corridos por no haberlo alcanzado y desesperados del todo de conseguirlo? No me detengo más en procurar este supuesto, porque me parece que quien discurriere despacio y sin pasión juzgará acerca de esto lo mismo. Y así supuestas estas cuatro cosas, pruebo mi proposición, que la erección de este nuevo convento no será de especial utilidad para el bien espiritual de sus almas, ni en este modo de vida se adelantaran en la virtud. Pruébolo así; para la perfección que se debe procurar en una religión es necesario un natura [sic] constante, un animo resuelto, firme y muy poco mudable (porque aunque todos los hombres por su misma naturaleza padecen algunas mudanzas, cuando esta mutabilidad es notable, ¿quién duda que se opone a la perfección?) Es menester también para el buen gobierno de una comunidad [de] religiosas, gran discreción y prudencia, las cuales no se hallan en entendimientos muy cortos. En estos pobre es

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conocida la inconstancia muy notable la mutabilidad y apenas [se] halla o se descubre el entendimiento; luego no son aptos o capaces para la perfección propia del estado religioso y para su prudente y discreto gobierno; luego no será este modo de vida de especial utilidad para el bien espiritual de sus almas, ni se adelantarán en la virtud por este camino. Si el Señor los quisiera virtuosos y

perfectos en este estado, les hubiera comunicado las dichas calidades y talentos, que tanto conducen para conseguirlo. No se las ha comunicado luego porque no los quiere buenos y virtuosos por este camino sino por otro más acomodado a la corta capacidad que de su graciosa y liberal mano han recibido. Y digo que no son aptos y capaces para la perfección propia del estado religioso, y que este modo de vida no será de especial utilidad para sus almas; porque para otro modo de virtud y perfección acomodada a la corta capacidad que tienen, son muy aptos y capaces y en este modo se pueden adelantar y perfeccionar mucho y mejor que en el estado religioso; aunque éste de suyo sea más perfecto. Y por esto supuse lo que los Doctores enseñan, que no hemos de encaminar a las almas por otro camino sino sólo por aquel por donde Dios las lleva, y en aquel modo de vida las debemos ejercitar, de donde conocemos sacan más provecho para sus almas. Uno de estos pobres Naturales merece más y agrada más a Dios Nuestro Señor poniéndole flores a un santo, encendiéndole sus velas, echándole su sahumerio, que si gastara muchas horas en el ejercicio tan santo de la oración mental, en la cual, sin duda, gastaría el tiempo sin provecho. Un pedazo de pan que dan de limosna, como lo suelen hacer frecuentemente, le agrada más a Nuestro Señor por la singular piedad y compasión con que lo hacen, que otros muchos actos de virtudes superiores, porque no conocen su naturaleza ni alcanzan a distinguir su perfección. Cuando se les predica la palabra de Dios, es necesario que no sólo sean llanas y clarísimas las palabras, muy naturales y

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materiales los símiles, muy breves y bien distintos los períodos, sino que también es forzoso y necesario que aún en un mismo sermón se les repita una misma cosa muchas veces y que en muchos y varios sermones se les vuelva a decir casi siempre lo mismo. Pues ¿cómo será posible que por sí mismos discurran como se requiere, en el ejercicio santo de la oración mental? ¿Cómo podrán conocer cuánto conducen para la perfección muchísimas menudencias de la regular observancia? ¿Cómo podrán advertir de qué cosas muy ligeras a los principios se puedan seguir la total relajación de su instituto? Y así digo por último que tan lejos está de ser esta nueva fundación que se pretende para el bien de sus almas y mayor gloria de Dios, que antes juzgo será dentro de pocos años la risa y escándalo de los venideros. Así lo juzgo delante de Dios. Hecho en el Colegio de San Gregorio de la Compañía de Jesús, en esta ciudad de México a diez y nueve de mayo de 1723

Alejandro Romano

Me mandó V. A. por auto de vuestro Real Acuerdo que expresase mi parecer, en orden a una fundación de religiosas caciques que se intenta en esta imperial ciudad de México, y obedeciendo como debo a este mandato, digo que no hallo disposición en las Indias, antes sí positiva ineptitud, para ser religiosas, por las razones siguientes:

son las religiosas unas señoras cristianas, que deseando conseguir la perfección de todas las virtudes, profesan de vivir en comunidad y en perpetua clausura debajo de la obediencia de una Prelada que las obligue a guardar los tres votos comunes a todos los religiosos, y otras reglas y estatutos que se juzgan ser medios eficaces para conseguir su fin. Para nada de todo ésto yo veo disposición en las Indias.

Primeramente, no tienen natural para poder vivir en comunidad, como lo manifiesta su modo antiguo y presente de vivir, pues antes de la venida de nuestra Santa Fe a estas tierras (quitados los que vivían

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en compañía de sus Reyezuelos), los demás moraban en los montes y en rancherías pequeñas como aún acostumbran los gentiles, los cuales, aunque después del santo bautismo, a costa de mucho trabajo de sus Ministros se hayan reducido, se vayan reduciendo a pueblos, siempre han conservado y conservan en gran parte su natural disposición a la vida asociable e incivil; pues cada uno fabrica su casa bien distante de la del otro, lo puede haber de una de estas dos razones: o por que no tienen paciencia y providencia para sufrir, y [disimular] alguna molestia de vecino, o para que no sean notadas sus acciones; o por lo uno, o por lo otro, que es lo más verosímil. Y si el natural de los Indios es tal que no puede sufrir el vivir uno al lado de otro ¿cómo podrán acostumbrarse las Indias a vivir juntas en una casa expuesta cada una a la vista de todas que le noten sus acciones para que se las corrija su Prelada, y obligada a asimilar y a sufrir las molestias de todas?

Falta también generalmente hablando de los Indios la constancia de ánimo en sus buenos propósitos, como nos enseña la experiencia, y aunque ésta faltara, no lo hiciera manifiesto la razón, porque la facilidad en mudar de parecer y de voluntad se origina, como enseñó Sto. Tomás, de la imperfección del entendimiento en conocer los objetos. Por esta razón los Ángeles

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clara y perfectamente conocen las cosas, son muy tenaces en sus juicios y afectos; y por la misma razón vemos en los hombres que los más cortos de entendimiento son también más expuestos a mudar de parecer y de voluntad. Siendo pues notoria la suma cortedad de entendimiento en los Indios, a la cual se sigue como su propiedad la inconstancia. ¿Quién no ve la ineptitud que tienen las caciques para el estado religioso, el cual dice perpetuidad en el ejercicio de virtudes muy arduas y repugnantes a la humana naturaleza?

Confirma este discurso la experiencia, porque no hay duda que es más fácil y menos repugnante a la humana flaqueza el cumplir con las obligaciones de casado que con las de religioso, y con todo, apenas se hallará India casada que no se haya arrepentido de serlo, y muchas de ellas se arrepienten tan de veras que dejan para siempre a sus maridos; por lo cual yo no veo como pueda dictar la prudencia que mujeres tan inconstantes profesen estado de religión y de clausura perpetua, el cual pide mucha constancia de animo y no menor fortaleza que falta también generalmente en las Indias, por cuya causa son ineptas para el estado religioso, pues éste es estado de mortificación de todas las pasiones, y de un continuo anhelo a la abnegación de la propia voluntad; lo cual no se puede conseguir sin una gran fortaleza de ánimo; efecto en gran parte del entendimiento, que descubre

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a la voluntad lo honesto de las virtudes, escondida a los sentidos, y con éso la alienta y esfuerza a mortificar sus apetitos desordenados. Por esa razón todos los padres y directores de espíritu encargan tanto la meditación de las verdades eternas a los que tienen en su cuidado; porque sin ésta no puede haber fortaleza

en el Alma; sin fortaleza no puede haber mortificación, y sin mortificación es locura el pretender de alcanzar virtud alguna. Siendo pues notorio que el entendimiento de las Indias es cortísimo, es también manifiesto que son incapaces para bien meditar de sí mismas las verdades eternas y consiguientemente que les falta la fortaleza de ánimo tan necesaria para mortificar las pasiones y para llevar no solamente la cruz que el Señor mandó cargar a todos los cristianos como medio necesario para alcanzar el cielo, mas también la más pesada y más difícil para llevarse, y por éso no quiso que fuese obligatoria sino de consejo cual es la de los religiosos, que por más agradar al Señor prometen con voto varias cosas muy arduas y difíciles de ejecutarse. Que las Indias sean de entendimiento tan corto que no puedan meditar y discurrir seriamente sobre las verdades de nuestra fe, me lo ha enseñado la experiencia de treinta años que las manejo; pues por diligencias que he hecho para enseñarlas el modo de meditar, todas han salido vanas y sin fruto.

Dudan los Doctores si sea válido o no el voto de castidad que hace quien es sumamente inclinado a la incontinencia

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y muchos de ellos, muy graves, afirman que no, fundados en que este voto respectivo a tal persona *non est de meliori bono*, ni puede ser sacrificio agradable al Señor por faltarle la sal de la prudencia. Yo no quiero que estas razones valgan para probar en las Indias la incapacidad de ser religiosas, por la suma dificultad que han de hallar en cumplir con todas las obligaciones de este estado, ¿pero quién podrá negarme que dichas razones a los menos convencen que no se les debe permitir el que profesen dicho estado, que les puede ser ocasión más de tropiezo que de provecho espiritual?

Ni a ésto satisface con decir que la gracia divina y no la luz de nuestro discurso es la que enfrena y sujeta nuestras pasiones; porque la gracia no solamente obra en nosotros, mas también con nosotros, y ordinariamente se acomoda a la naturaleza, como nos enseñan los Doctores, los cuales también afirman que de los talentos naturales que el Señor ha dado [ ] alguna persona, se puede elegir el empleo a que la destina en su Iglesia. Constándonos pues el corto alcance de las Indias para conocer lo honesto de las virtudes propias de las personas religiosas, no debemos esperar que el Señor supla su falta natural con luz extraordinaria, sino juzgar que no las quiere para tal estado, supuesto que las negó el talento del entendimiento y discurso tan necesario según el orden de su Providencia ordinaria para alcanzar las virtudes religiosas.

Pero sobre todo yo no veo en las Indias rastro tampoco de aquella gran prudencia y cordura que se requiere en una superiora para gobernar a una comunidad

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de mujeres incapaces y en las súbditas para obedecer a una Prelada de la misma calidad, porque para bien gobernar a gente incapaz se necesita en quien gobierna de gran conocimiento de las inclinaciones y disposiciones del ánimo de cada una de sus súbditas, como también de mucho disimulo, paciencia y destreza, llevando a cada una por su camino, sufriéndole muchas faltas sin perjuicio empero de bien común; calidades que no se pueden esperar sino casi milagrosamente en una superiora India de poquísimo alcance; y menos se puede esperar en las súbditas

incapaces aquella heroica humildad, paciencia y obediencia ciega que se requiere para sufrir a una superiora ignorante y consiguientemente indiscreta.

Este pues, muy poderoso Señor, es mi parecer en orden a la nueva fundación que se intenta, y creo que del mismo parecer han sido y son cuantos superiores de religiones han habido hasta ahora y hay en este inmenso Reino, porque siendo los Indios capaces de ser religiosos, siendo también naturalmente tan humildes, con todo, ningún superior los ha querido ni los quiere admitir aún por legos en su religión, por ser mucha su incapacidad, inconstancia, y flaqueza de ánimo, razones que deben tener más fuerza hablando de las Indias, por ser de sexo mas imperfecto.

También juzgo que este parecer es conforme al juicio que de esta gente han hecho los supremos gobernadores de ella, así eclesiásticos como seglares, porque aquellos considerando su gran flaqueza

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en vencer sus pasiones, nacida en gran parte de su poco alcance, los han eximido de la obligación de guardar algunas leyes eclesiásticas que obligan a todos los cristianos, y esto por la misma razón, considerándolos como ha pupilos y menores dan por nulos sus contratos hechos sin consentimiento de quien está en lugar de su tutor. México, 20 de mayo de 1723.

Antonio Xavier García

Aprecio con todo mi debido rendimiento y estimación la honra que V. A. se sirve de hacerme, mandándome decir mi parecer e informe a V. A. sobre la nueva fundación de convento de religiosas Indias caciques que solicita la piedad del Marques de Balero. Y considerando que así la superioridad del mandato y confianza que V. A. se digna hacer de mí, como la gravedad de la materia, no me permiten otra contemplación que la que mire al acierto en determinación de tanta importancia y consecuencia. No puedo dejar de decir con toda sinceridad mi sentir deducido de la experiencia adquirida en espacio de diez años en que me he empleado en el ministerio y

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espiritual dirección de Indios e Indias que en crecido número ocurren a este Colegio de San Gregorio.

Digo pues, que aunque con dicha experiencia tengo reconocidas y notadas en las Indias partes muy conducentes para el religioso [sic] a que las desea y pretende elevar dicha piedad, cuales son la falta de codicia y afecto desreglado [sic] a los bienes temporales, la honestidad y sujeción y rendimiento de voluntad y juicio, ánimo pío e inclinación a la devoción; sin embargo, hablando en común y no en particular sino absolutamente, estas conducentes partes no las reconozco tan acompañadas de la constancia necesaria para ser dichas Indias elevadas a estado religioso, antes tengo notada en ellas la contraria inestabilidad y genios volubles a que concurrirá no poco su menor capacidad. También por lo que en ellas tengo notado de genios poco sociables y ambulativos [sic] las discurro menos aptas para la vida común, y que les será muy grave la perpetua y obligatoria clausura. Por lo cual mi parecer y sentir es que dichas Indias nunca se admitan al estado religioso,

o que en caso de admitirse, ésto no sea con sólo el tiempo para prueba que se requiere en las españolas, sino con mucho más tiempo y edad y más dilatada prueba y experiencia. De donde tendría por acertado no pareci

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endo otra cosa al superior juicio de V. A. que si para que obtuviesen prompto [sic] logro, y más distante de desacierto las cuantiosas expensas consumidas en la fábrica de la tan bien trazada habitación, como para que el discurso del tiempo tan calificado maestro dictase lo mejor y no expuesto a peligrosas contingencias, lo que se pretende sea convento de religiosas Indias se destinase por ahora para casa de su recogimiento o beaterio, en que aunque no tengan el estado, vivan como religiosas con la dirección de algún sabio y espiritual Maestro, que las instruya en distribución proporcionada a su capacidad, les predique e imponga en ejercicios devotos, para que según oigo de testigos oculares podría servir de ejemplar el beaterio de Indias que con gran provecho suyo y no menos edificación de todos, años ha que se instituyó y florece en la ciudad de Guatemala, de que podrá V. A. tomar informe. Éste es mi sentir, salvo mejor juicio. En este colegio de San Gregorio, de la Compañía de Jesús de México. En 20 días de mayo de 1723.

Antonio Miranda

Fray Antonio Miranda del Orden de Predicadores. Cura Ministro. Por su Majestad de la doctrina de los Mistecos, cita en el convento de religiosos de Ntro. Padre Sto. Domingo de México. En obedecimiento al Auto acordado de esta Real Audiencia sobre que se informe a cerca de la utilidad y conveniencia de la fundación de religiosas naturales, en el Convento Real de las Descalzas [ ]

Digo que supuesto su congrua sustentación, no hallo inconveniencia alguna. Antes sí, en lo espiritual, el bien de que gente tan devota emplee su natural inclinación en el culto y servicio de Dios, siendo su divina Majestad alabado con las voces que proferirán unos corazones puros. También, deduciendo lo político a lo espiritual, veo que será de gran gloria a nuestro Católico monarca y nación Española, pues con su invicto brazo y santo celo no sólo se verá y dirá que redujo tan bárbara nación al suave yugo de nuestra santa fé, haciendo que obedeciera sus preceptos y los observara, sino también que lo ha conducido con sus buenos ministros y ejemplos a la perfección de abrazar los consejos evangélicos; mostrándose en esta acción agradecida pues por el material oro que esta tierra le tributó, le ha dado y da el finísimo e incorruptible de la caridad y demás virtudes; que según la experiencia que tengo, ejercitarán en su religioso convento las dichas naturales, que como supongo serán las más nobles, no digo de su capacidad, porque la supongo, ésto estando como están muy expeditas en la lengua castellana y en todo lo demás de disciplina que conduce para dicho estado. Otras muchas razones de consecuencia omito, que supongo en la altísima comprensión de Ntra. Católica Majestad, de sus prudentes y justos ministros para la ejecución de tan santa y piadosa obra. De este Imperial Convento de N. P. Sto. Domingo de México, mayo 14 de 1723.

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Acuerdo de México y mayo 31 de 1723. El Fiscal con los informes de los padres ministros de Doctrina y con lo que dijere se traiga [ ]

Por Decreto de veinte y seis de diciembre del año pasado de setecientos y diez y nueve, Ntro. Exmo. Virrey Marques de Balero participó a este Ayuntamiento el que la piedad de algunas personas celosas del servicio de Dios había concurrido con limosna para la fundación de un convento de religiosas Franciscas Descalzas que deseaban hubiese en esta ciudad, en que se había intestado por haberse de dar el hábito en él a Indias caciques hasta el numero de 18, obra que era del servicio de Dios y del Rey, y consuelo de los naturales en que sus hijas tuviesen donde poder consagrarse al Altísimo, con cuyo interés se aplicarían a educarlas e instruirlas de las circunstancias que necesitasen para conseguir tan loable fin. Pidiendo concurriese este Ayuntamiento por su parte habiéndose ya conferido la licencia que Ntro. Reverendo Arzobispo y ocurrido Ntro. Exmo Virrey a Ntra. Real Persona para que impartiese la necesaria y en la precisa inteligencia de que al cuidado y solicitud de dicho Sr. Virrey había de correr la situación de la necesaria perpetua manutención de las religiosas, como en el Decreto se enuncia, pues de otra suerte nunca pudiera haberse escusado este Cabildo de representar el copioso numero de monasterios que hoy se hallan fundados y las escaseces [sic] en que están los más de ellos. En el Cabildo que celebró el día treinta de diciembre del propio año, obedecido el Decreto, se ofreció concurrir lo que fuera del obsequio de dicho Ntro.

[f39v]

Exmo. Virrey como directo a fin tan útil al servicio de ambas majestades. Pero como querrá que con su [ ] sin haber previdenciado [sic] fundamento alguno para la manutención y conservación de las religiosas (caso que tenga efecto su formal construcción) sólo ha quedado el más [ ] edificio del monasterio, no halla este Ayuntamiento ni dentro de la Ley ni fuera de ella la urgencia, necesidad, y justas causas que se necesitan, antes sí, ha enseñado la práctica experiencia el ser inútil semejante providencia, porque no siendo nueva la premeditada con los loables y santos fines de que las Indias doncellas, descendientes de caciques tuvieran tan glorioso estado, y sus padres con mayor atención las educaran, proporcionándolas a tan Católico y decoroso destino, pues con estas propias reflexiones se fundó el convento de la Limpia y pura Concepción de esta ciudad para que en él entrasen las de semejante calidad y profesasen vida monástica, como así mismo el de Santa Clara de la ciudad de Santiago de Querétaro que fundó un cacique; ni en uno ni en otro han probado las naturales, por haberse reconocido les es durísimo el entrar en las costumbres políticas que indispensablemente necesita la vida común, de suerte que por no inclinarse ni amoldarse éstas a sus reglas, se ha poblado ambos conventos de religiosas Españolas, siendo como es. Aun en lo material inexquible [sic] tan santo fin deseado por no haber prevenido nuestro Virrey las considerables porciones que se necesitan para preparar todo lo preciso del servicio del Culto Divino, manutención de religiosos o religioso que les han de asistir y demás dotaciones, no pudiéndose diferir tan importantes expensas a la contingencia de la mendiguez, pues aún para la diaria sustentación del número de diez y ocho religiosas, le fuera hoy difícil al público el contribuir por lo onerado

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que se halla el Comercio, que es de donde todo proviene, con los monasterios Mendicantes y demás obras piadosas que se mantienen de la providencia; concurriendo el desmedido número de miserables mendigos de todas especies en que hoy abunda esta República, no bastando para su alivio la profusa caridad de sus abitadores [sic] en cuya consideración siendo como es más obligatorio y prudente el haber de conservarse los monasterios ya edificados y calificados con

tanta diuturnidad, que el haberse de construir y fundar el que no se necesita, contingente en su formal verificación y muy dudoso en su manutención. V. A. en vista de todo resolverá lo que fuere de su superior agrado. Sala Capitular de México, mayo 25 de 1723.

Joseph de Ribera

Certifico yo, Fray Joseph de Ribera, Padre y Vicario en el convento de Sras. religiosas Descalzas de Sta. Isabel de esta Ciudad de México, haber conocido, muchos años confesado, y haber dispuesto in *articulo mortis* a Joana de la Concepción, India, quien se crió desde sus tiernos años en este dicho Convento, sirviéndole a la Reverenda Madre Isabel de Sta. Clara y murió en él de edad de más de ochenta. Así mismo, por noticia que tengo de religiosas ancianas y graves, haberse criado y muerto en este convento otras indias, como fue una, nombrada María, que sirvió a una religiosa lega llamada María de San Blas. Otra nombrada Nicolaza a quien crió la Reverenda Madre Josepha de San Juan. Otra que crió la Reverenda Madre Ambrosía de San Pedro nombrada Nicolaza. Otra que crió la Reverenda Madre Josepha de San Andrés, nombrada Magdalena. Otra que crió la Reverenda Madre María de San Antonio, nombrada María de la Cruz. Otra que crió la Reverenda Madre María de Jesús, nombrada María de la Trinidad. Y otras muchas, unas que se han criado desde sus tiernos años y han muerto en el convento, otras que aunque no se han criado en el convento sino que han entrado ya grandes, han perseverado hasta morir y algunas que están niñas que están perseverando en el convento desde sus tiernos años hasta la presente, y certifico esto para y donde convenga. En este sobredicho convento de Sta. Isabel de México, en primero de julio de 1723.

[f 50r]

Antonio Torres

Fray Antonio Torres, Lector jubilado y Vicario de religiosas del convento de N. M. Sta. Clara de esta ciudad de México, certifico que en este sobredicho convento se han educado, asistiendo a algunas religiosas, seis naturales caciques que son; Dña. Joanna [ ] González de la Peña, y Granada que entró de edad de cinco años y tiene ya cuarenta, Dña. María Gregoria Bernal, que tiene 25 años, Dña. María Nicolasa Ontiveros, que tiene 30 años, Dña. Ana María Cortés, nieta de los Reyes de Alacorzan, que tiene 17 años, Dña. Rosa María de los Dolores y Cozumel de 25, Dña. María Lucía de Palencia de 25 años. Todo lo cual me consta por dicho de la R. M. María de San José, religiosa antigua y Abadesa actual de este dicho convento y por ser así verdad doy esta certificación para que conste donde convenga y la firmé en la celda de la habitación de los RR. PP. Vicarios de este convento, de esta sobredicha ciudad de México en 2 de julio de 1723.

[f 53r]

Pedro Valo de Villavicencio

[ ] principal y fundamental de todas, que es la constancia en sus buenos propósitos por ser en ellas notoria por la misma experiencia la inestabilidad, y genios volubles y deambultivos [sic] y también poco sociables y por esto menos aptas para la vida común, y que les será sumamente difícil y prabosa [sic] la perpetua clausura. Y esto aunque no lo hubieran experimentado y hubieran conocido con la misma

experiencia y ejercicio en el dilatado tiempo que se han empleado en la enseñanza y Doctrina de las Indias, educándolas y manteniéndolas con el gasto espiritual con admiración y edificación de toda esta corte los Padres Alexandro Romano, Joseph María de Guebara y Andrés Xavier García de la Compañía de Jesús, como lo expresan en sus informes; son tan doctas las razones, así teológicas como jurídicas que proponen, que convencen sin duda alguna que les falta a las Indias aquella constancia de Ánimo que se requiere para la perseverancia en el estado religioso y perpetua clausura.

Y porque en los referidos informes se contiene ya con toda claridad y especificación todo cuanto por lo espiritual y místico y por lo jurídico y político se pudiera discurrir para prueba de los gravísimos inconvenientes de que las Indias sean admitidas al estado de religiosas, pues aún en los hombres es constante, que ni aún para legos admiten a los Indios en las religiones, y por su flaqueza y cortos alcances y rusticidad, son exemptos de la obligación de guardar algunas leyes eclesiásticas que obligan a todos los demás, y por considerarlos el Señor como pupilos y menores les ha concedido los privilegios de éstos y no permite que sus contratos, principalmente la enajenación de tierras en pasando de la corta cantidad de 30 pesos, corran ni subsistan sin la intervención del juez, y prolijas solemnidades de la ley 27, título primero, libro sexto de la Novísima de Indias, para evitar el que por su corta capacidad no sean engañados ni se les causen fraudes y perjuicios, en esta atención [ ] diciendo el oidor fiscal por su

[f53v]

pedimento, lo docto y sólido de los referidos informes. Se ha de servir V. A. de mandar se informe a V. R. a persona no ser conveniente la fundación del convento de religiosas descalzas de San Fco. para que sólo entren Indias, y que la sumptuosa habitación que para este efecto se halla fabricada se pudiera destinar por ahora para casa de su recogimiento o beaterio en que aunque no tuvieran estado, vivieran como religiosas con la dirección de algún sabio y espiritual maestro que las instruya en distribución proporcionada a su capacidad. Y que caso que su Real Ánimo no condescendiera en ésto, se sirva destinar la referida fábrica, a fin de que se logren sus costas expensas, para Hospicio de los religiosos Misioneros de la Recolección de San Fco. de la Cruz de Querétaro, porque le consta a V. A. con cuánta aceptación de esta corte y fruto espiritual de las Almas vienen a ella a hacer misiones, no contentándose su santo y ardiente celo con convertir infieles y reducir cada día Indios bárbaros al conocimiento de la santa fe Católica, y sujeción a V. R. Persona, penetrando para ello las más incultas y distantes tierras sin cesar en todo el año de predicar por todo el Reino. Sino que así en ésta, como en las demás ciudades, hacen también misión después de haberla ejecutado en las tierras más remotas, y no tienen cómoda habitación en que hospedarse. Y que dicho informe sea con testimonio de estos autos, para que en vista de todo resuelva V. R. Persona lo que fuera del su Real agrado. México, 4 nov. 1723.

Appendix IV

AUTOS HECHOS EN EL COVENTO DE SAN JOSÉ DE RELIGIOSAS CARMELITAS DESCALZAS. INQ. VOL. 581 EXP. 1

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Apuntes de algunas virtudes que señalaron varias religiosas de este convento antiguo de Nuestro Padre y Señor San José y carmelitas descalzas
Archivo Histórico del Convento de San José de Carmelitas Descalzas[658]

Carta, 1640
AHCSJ

De algunas cosas que he visto en este convento y de la vida de la Madre Bernarda de San Juan
AHCSJ

Relatos extraordinarios de la religiosa fundadora Inés de la Cruz, 1640
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Vida de algunas religiosas primitivas del convento de San José
AHCSJ

Vida de la Madre María de la Natividad
AHCSJ

Vida de la Madre Juana de San Esteban, 1650
AHCSJ

Vocación, vida y visiones de la Madre Ana. Se señalan los milagros de la fundadora Inés de la Cruz
AHCSJ

Ana de San Bartolomé, *Vida de la madre Bernarda de San Juan*, 1650
AHCSJ

Avendaño, Nicolás de, *Crónica de la Fundación del Convento de San José de Carmelitas Descalzas de México*
AHCSJ

Inés de la Cruz, *Fundación*
AHCSJ

Isabel de la Visitación, *Relato de una Relación de lo que le sucedió*
AHCSJ

María del Niño Jesús, *Escritos*, 1640
AHCSJ

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[658] Hereafter AHCSJ.

María de Santa Inés, *Vida de Bernarda de San Juan*, 1650
AHCSJ

Mariana de la Encarnación, *Fundación*
AHCSJ

Margarita de San Bernardo, *Apuntes sobre la vida de la hermana Beatríz de Santiago*,1630
AHCSJ

Méndez, J. B. *Historia de la Fundación*
AHCSJ

Petronila de San Ildefonso, *Vida de Bernarda de San Juan*, 1640
AHCSJ

Sta Catalina de Sena: Crónica

[The main text is the *Libro de Memorias* belonging to Beatríz de las Vírgenes (1620-1663) who was prioress of the convent six times. On two occasions, the *vidas* of nuns recounted in Beatríz de las Virgenes' book are supplemented by the information contained in Alonso Franco y Ortega's *Historia de la Provincia de Santiago en México: Orden de Predicadores en la Nueva España* (1645)]

Convento de Nuestra Señora de las Nieves: Crónica

[The chronicle consists of one volume, divided into five sections and covers the period 1739-1783. It is possible to identify the various authors of the sections as follows;
A: María Catalina de la Concepción [copies the original Spanish chronicle dealing with the foundation of the mother house in Vitoria (Basque Country) and includes a *vida* of St Bridget]
B: Benita Francisca de San José
C: Isabel Antonio de San Miguel [principal author writing 100 pages of what is a 230 page document.]
D: Inés Joaquina del Sr Sn José [taking dictation from C]
E: possibly María Antonio de San Pedro [telling of C's death]

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