



# 'A Firestone of Divine Love' Erotic Desire and the Ephemeral Flame of Hispanic Jesuit Mysticism

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*"A Firestone of Divine Love" :*

**Erotic Desire and the Ephemeral Flame of Hispanic Jesuit Mysticism**

A dissertation presented by

Juan Miguel Marín

To

The Faculty of Harvard Divinity School

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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***'A Firestone of Divine Love'***

**Erotic Desire and the Ephemeral Flame of Hispanic Jesuit Mysticism**

**Abstract**

*A Firestone of Divine Love* serves as capstone of two years Jesuit ministry and fifteen of academic study. It extends nine articles into a book project to be published by Gorgias Press. Its original thesis appeared as:

In the last decades of the sixteenth century the Society of Jesus prohibited its members the reading of several mystical texts. A theme that cuts across these texts is the use of erotic language to describe the relationship between the soul and God. I argue that behind the prohibition lies the fear that erotic desire would be a threat to a Jesuit masculine identity.

“Heterosexual Melancholia and Mysticism in the Early Society of Jesus”  
*Theology & Sexuality* 13/2, 1/2007

Working across the disciplines of History of Christianity and Women, Gender and Sexuality studies, I integrate these articles and deepen the original thesis within its 16<sup>th</sup> century Hispanic context.

Chapter One introduces as historical setting the late medieval spirituality that inspired the first Jesuits to compose their order's earliest spiritual texts, exemplifying it with the mystical doctrines of annihilation and deification. Chapter Two develops the first half of the deepened thesis: late medieval mysticism offered Jesuits of the first generation an erotic discourse that served as a space for grieving loss, even when within the confines of a gestating Jesuit masculine ideal.

Chapter Three develops the second half. Jesuits of the second generation succumbed to the popular views dominating in a late 16<sup>th</sup> c. Spanish atmosphere permeated by the Inquisition's association of heterodox spirituality with women, racial minorities, and sodomites. It links the 1573 edict against

mysticism with the 1599 decree against the admission of racial minorities, the de-emphasis on the importance of women's ministry, and the condemnation of erotic interpretations of Christian bridal language as potentially moving Jesuits too close to feminized racial undesirables. Finally, Chapter Four explores the aftermath of 1599 and its impact on the ministry of Jesuits who, living in the margins and borderlands of the Hispanic empire, were able to preserve in their writings the tradition of Jesuit mysticism and ministry.

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**To the loving memory of my mother,**

**Olga Rodrigues (1950-2014)**

## Prologue



[Joachim of Fiore's] third order is of those contemplating God according to the mode of elevation, that is, the ecstasy (*excessus*) and rapture (*raptus*). . . . This is the order of the seraphim. It seems that [Saint] Francis belonged to this. In these people the church will be consummated. But what this future order is to be, or if it already exists, is not easy to know...[for it] will not flourish unless Christ appears and suffers in His mystical body.

– Bonaventure *Collationes in Hexaameron* (1221–1274)<sup>1</sup>

*Out with the Old, In with the New! Hearts! Words! Deeds! Let everything be renewed! [Abbot Joachim prophesied] this Third Age: a renewal of Spirit as if Jesus Christ born anew, resurrected anew from the dead, inspiring the Holy Spirit in his disciples, apostles to preach throughout the world building churches anew...*

*...These are the Mysteries and deeds by which it is clearly proven that the Holy Spirit sent this Society [of Jesus], the [seraphic] order prophesied would come once the Gospel had been preached throughout the world ... [to] all kinds of Christians, Muslims, Jewish, women, laymen, children, in order to become the true Christians...*

- Manuscript 5874, Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, anonymous letter to Francis Borgia (d.1573), grand-nephew of pope Alexander VI and future general of the Society of Jesus, later known as "Jesuits."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Plates from *Opuscula plurima* (61), (*Collationes in Hexaameron*, etc. (I)); (*Epistola continens XXV memorialia*, etc. [Praec.] *Octavianus De Martinis: Oratio in vitam et merita S. Bonaventurae. Seudo-Buenaventura: Speculum disciplinae ad novitios*. [Sign.: Ss3-Tt5] *David De Augusta: De vitiis et eorum remediis* (= *De ext. et int. hominis compositione* II,2). (II). Edición original: Argentinae : [Typ. Jordani: "Sermones" (H. 9438)], 18 diciembre, 1495. Universidad de Sevilla; 16th century Italian depiction of a beguine, Biblioteca Casanatense. Francoforte sul Meno; 18th century Italian depiction of Bl. Bartolomeo Cordoni Pinacoteca Comunale | Piazza Gabriotti 1, 06012 Città di Castello

<sup>2</sup> "Destiérrense las vegeztes, sea todo nuevo, el corazón, las palabras, las obras... En el principio del tercer estado del siglo, el Espíritu se a de renovar como si Jesu Cristo nasciese en aquellos días y, resucitado de entre los muertos, inspirase su Espíritu Sancto en sus discípulos, y como si de nuevo embiase a pedricar a los apóstoles por todo el



In 1492, somewhere at the Spanish Empire's Hispano-Italian margins, a student of "impure" Jewish blood named Bartolomeo Cordoni of Città da Castello married his youth's sweetheart Marguerite only to watch her slowly die of a mysterious illness.<sup>3</sup> His desolation led him to seek consolation to adopt the Franciscanized spirituality of twelfth century Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore, who predicted apocalyptic events and the birth of religious orders whose members, *virii spirituales*, would herald a purified church.<sup>4</sup> Cordoni had breathed such apocalyptic spirituality in Florence, as a student of the recently founded humanities curriculum. Smoke suffused Florence's air at the time, due to the "bonfire of the vanities" prophetism of reformist friar Jerome Savonarola, later burned at the stake for preaching against a corrupt church governed by the infamous Borgia

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mundo, y como si de nuevo erigiesen iglesias i las edificasen, lo qual todo, como e dicho, a de acaecer en espíritu en el principio del tercer estado del siglo. Díganme los que en esto dubdaren: ¿Qué quiere ser aver esta Compañía y orden ... Mysteriös son éstos y obras por las quales se prueba claramente que esta Compañía es embiada por el Espíritu Sancto y que es la orden que estava prophetizada que avía de venir después de predicado el Evangelio en el universo mundo y en todas las partes donde avía gentiles y idólatras, quésta es señal cierta que comienza agora el tercer estado del siglo y el sexto tiempo de la Iglesia, que son los últimos" (Pról, fol 9-14). All translations mine.

<sup>3</sup> The most complete biographical material appears in N. Santinelli, *Il Beato Bartolomeo Cordoni e Le Fonti Della Sua Mistica:(con Lettera Dell'on. Sen. Pietro Fedele)* (Leonardo Da Vinci, 1930); Giovanni Muzi, *Memorie Ecclesiastiche e Civili Di Città Di Castello: , V. [1]-5. Memorie Ecclesiastiche Di Città Di Castello* (F. Donati, 1843). Similar material appears in A. Certini, *Istoria di 60 famiglie tifernati* (ms.); Agostino da Stroncone, *L'Umbria serafica*, in *Miscellanea francescana*, VII (1898), V. 74; Bernardino da Colpetrazzo, *Historia Ordinis Fr. Minor. Capuccinorum* (*Mon. Hist. Ord. Minor. Capucc, II*), I, Assisi 1929, 24; Mattia da Salò, *Historia capuccina* (*ibid. V*), I, Roma 1954, 151-3; G. Oddi da Perugia, *La Franceschina* (1572), 11, Firenze 1931, 456-83; F. Gonzaga, *De origine religionis franciscanae*, Roma 1587, C. 159; L. Wadding, *Script. Ord. Minor*, Romae 1609, 37; G. G. Sbaraglia, *Supplementum et castigatio ad Scriptores trium ordinum S. Francisci*, Romae 1908, I, 118; L. Jacobilli, *Vite de' santi e beati dell'Umbria*, Foligno 1647, 1, 381-85; G. B. Vermiglioli, *Biografia degli scrittori Perugini*, Perugia 1828, 1, 303; Melchiorre da Poblatura, *Hist. gener. O. F. M. Capucc*, Roma 1947, 1, 197. All of them omit Cordoni's Jewish heritage. For Cordoni's family see Ariel Toaff, *The Jews in Umbria: 1484-1736* (Brill, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages; a Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore & the Prophetic Future: A Medieval Study in Historical Thinking*, New, rev. ed. (Stroud: Sutton Pub, 1999) For Joachimites and Spiritual Franciscanism see Chapter 2, especially n.87. A helpful introduction can be found in Stanislao (da Campagnola. ), *Francesco e Francescanesimo Nella Società Dei Secoli XIII-XIV* (Porziuncola, 1999); and S. da Campagnola, "Dai' Viri Spirituales' Di Gioacchino Da Fiore Ai' Fratres Spirituales' Di Francesco d'Assisi,'" *Picenum Seraphicum* 11 (1974): 24–52. See also Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages; a Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore & the Prophetic Future: A Medieval Study in Historical Thinking*, New, rev. ed. (Stroud: Sutton Pub, 1999).

pope, Alexander VI.<sup>5</sup> Cordoni later decided to follow in the footsteps of thirteenth century Franciscan “spirituali” mystic, Raymond Lull.<sup>6</sup> Wishing to become a “fool” like Lull, Cordoni took up St. Francis’ habit in 1503, collaborating with Franciscan beguines, uncloistered lay nuns who inspired by Franciscan women saints such as Angela of Foligno, devoted themselves to serving those marginalized by society because of their “disabilities (*deformitiés*).” Cordoni learned much about these women and “disabled” people, both of whom lived literally in the city margins. Councilmen designed these extramuros ghettos for the exclusion of prostitutes, lepers, and Jews, later dumping poor men, women and children who were lame, mute and/or blind, Jewish converts, African immigrants, or Muslim slaves. The Franciscan stood aghast at their treatment by city officials who believed all of these “dishonest people should be treated as public prostitutes because of their filth, tolerated only if they live in a bordello.”<sup>7</sup>

Cordoni spent his last years in ministerial collaborations with those serving these marginal groups, those men and women at the time often identified as “spirituali.” These “spirituali” or “espirituales” included not only beguines but also reform-oriented priests (*preti reformati*),

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<sup>5</sup> Gian Carlo Garfagnini and Giuseppe Picone, *Verso Savonarola: misticismo, profezia, empiti riformistici fra Medioevo ed età moderna: [atti della Giornata di studi, Poggibonsi, 30 aprile 1997]* (SISMEL edizioni del Galluzzo, 1999); Tamar Herzig, *Savonarola’s women: visions and reform in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Júlia Benavent i Benavent, *Savonarola y España*, *Interciencias*; 23. (Valencia: Centro Francisco Tomás y Valiente, UNED Alzira-Valencia, 2003); J. Inés Rodríguez Gómez, Donald Weinstein, and Júlia Benavent, *La figura de Jerónimo Savonarola O.P. y su influencia en España y Europa*, *Tempo di Savonarola*; 1. (Tavarnuzze (Firenze): SISMEL edizioni del Galluzzo, 2004); Antonio Samaritani, *Lucia da Narni ed Ercole I d’Este a Ferrara tra Caterina da Siena, Girolamo Savonarola e i Piagnoni: fonti e letteratura*, *Occhio di Ulisse*; 1 (Ferrara: Cartografica, 2006); Christopher Hibbert, *The Borgias and Their Enemies: 1431-1519*, 1st ed. (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc, 2008); Enzo Mazzi and Tom Benettollo, *Firenze e Savonarola* (Scandicci (Firenze): Centrolibro, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> For Lull and the problem of defining “spirituali” see Chapter 2. For now I’ll appropriate Kevin Madigan’s definition of Franciscan Spirituals as the “rigorist party within the Franciscan order, particularly with the regard to the issue of poverty. Olivi was often seen as their leader and the poisonous source from whom they derived their heretical doctrine.” Kevin Madigan, *Olivi and the Interpretation of Matthew in the High Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Lance Gabriel Lazar, *Working in the Vineyard of the Lord: Jesuit Confraternities in Early Modern Italy* (University of Toronto Press, 2005). See also Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking About Physical Impairment During the High Middle Ages, C. 1100-1400*, (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006).

including those who belonged to medieval monastic orders, like Benedictines and Carthusians, and those who belonged to what years later would become “early modern” orders, those Franciscan groupies whose antagonists later called “Jesuits.” The latter found patronage in the grand-nephew of Alexander VI, future Jesuit general Francis Borgia, under whose authority Cordoni placed himself as a Franciscan army chaplain serving Emperor Charles V’s Armada. He could have rubbed shoulders with famous Hispanic poet Garcilaso de la Vega, soon to die in Borgia’s arms, Diego Columbus, son of the most famous admiral, and humanist Cardinal Pietro Bembo, the lover of the infamous Lucrezia Borgia, our Borgia’s aunt.<sup>8</sup> He then joined the imperial crusade against the Muslim military forces of pirate Barbarossa, ready to depart June 1535 from the Spanish monastery of Montserrat.

At Montserrat he lived not only “Carthusian friendly” Benedictine monks but also with “Franciscan” beguines. A few of his Franciscan companions, worried he would die during the forthcoming war, asked Cordoni not to depart before distilling all this monastic and Franciscan wisdom by writing “something about divine love.”<sup>9</sup> So Cordoni agreed to compose a joyful dialogue. It would teach how God can speak through the voices of those held to be deformed, the “simple, those whose souls are formed by love and faith, because to them are revealed honorable secrets.”<sup>10</sup> It would teach how to overcome sadness through the foolish and mad love of *espirituales*, the “vile, abject simpletons; the poor in spirit,” arguing, against reason, that their “manifest madness ... is not carnal or bestial but holy and divine,” for God’s lovers can only speak about “honest things.”<sup>11</sup> And Cordoni composed such an honest text about “things that may seem incredible, “an honest, that is,

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<sup>8</sup> Eustaquio Fernández de Navarrete, *Vida del celebre poeta Garcilaso de la Vega: Mit Garcilaso de la Vega's Porträt* (Vinda de Calero, 1850).

<sup>9</sup> “... simples. Les aïes dels qls amor y fe informa: perço que a ells fon revelats honrofos secrets ...” [Bartolomeo Cordoni] *Dialogo del amor de Deu*. (Palau 71642) Barcelona Editorial : Amorós 1546; *Catàleg alfabètic d'autors i obres anònimes (1914-1990)* Diakonoff, I.M. - Diamant, Clara -- Fitxa 24 de 102.” fol. 28v, fol. 2r.

<sup>10</sup> “... simples. Les aïes dels qls amor y fe informa: perço que a ells fon revelats honrofos secrets ...” Cordoni, fol. 2r.

<sup>11</sup> “spirituals,” fol. 4v.; “manifesta follia ... no es carnal ni bestial, mes es net fanct y diuinal...” Cordoni, fol. 4r.; “persones vils simples delectades: als pobres d sperit: als mansuet: y humils decors,” Cordoni, fol. 5v.

virtuous, book speaking about a secret devotional practice that can lead a deformed human soul to deiform itself, to “surpass the seraphims and become divine.”<sup>12</sup> An honest book teaching that “of all sins despair is the worst,” and yet, a “melancholic in the depths of the abyss” can learn that a “multitude of sins does not impede attaining this union between God and soul.”<sup>13</sup> An honest book speaking of the “annihilation of one’s will” and of “exercises of love and of the freedom of a soul in love” immersed in the “fiery furnace of divine love”<sup>14</sup> Honest, even though Cordoni was not being entirely honest; for, when he claimed authorship of this book, he lied.

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I recently located at the Biblioteca de Catalunya what seems to be the lost “seul exemplar connu” of the Hispanic (Catalan) edition of Cordoni’s *Dialogo del Amor de Deu*.<sup>15</sup> Scholars are slowly recognizing this book *published with Borgia support* as one of the most influential books of Counter-Reformation Europe (Spain and Italy); influential even though it is primarily a Franciscanized paraphrase, at times plagiarism, of the late medieval *Mirror of Simple Souls* by Marguerite Porete, a

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<sup>12</sup> “cofes parē icrehibles” fol. 3 v.; “pot trespassar los seraphins y deificarfe,” fol 6 v.

<sup>13</sup> “desperatio est enim peior est omni peccato” fol 12r. “melanci en lo pregon del abifme” fol 21r. “multitud des peccats no empedeix la unio entre Deu y lanima” fol. 41r.

<sup>14</sup> “anichilacio de la propia voluntat,” fol. 52r; “exercici del amor, y dela libertat de lanima enamorada” fol. 67r. “pren licencia de les virtus” fol. 68r.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. M. Bujanda writes in 1971: “From 1559 on, for example, all published Spanish indices, even after the suppression of the Inquisition, contain the following work: Dialogos de la union del anima con Dios, en Toscano y en otra qualquier lengua. It was only very recently that I was able to identify this in the provincial library of Barcelona, where I found a Catalan work published in Barcelona in 1546, without its first page. “Dialogo del amor de Deu, son autor se ignora.” What was in question was a Catalan translation of Bartolomeo da Castello’s book, *De Unione anima cum supereminenti lumine*, first published in Perugia in 1538.” “Literary Censorship in Sixteenth-Century Spain” CCHA Study Sessions, 38(1971), 51-63. In 1990 he puts the first title in brackets and adds “Édition en catalan: [*Dialogo del amor de Deu*] Dialogos entre l’amour divin, la espos anima y la humana raho (seul exemplair connu),” Antonio Palau y Dulcet, *Manual Del Librero Hispano-Americano De Antonio Palau Y Dulcet* (Barcelona: Palacete Palau Dulcet, 1990); J. M De Bujanda, R. Davignon, and E. Stanek, *Index de Rome: 1557, 1559, 1564: les premiers index romains et l’index du Concile de Trente* (Librairie Droz, 1990); Jesús Martínez de Bujanda et al, *Index des livres interdits: Index de l’inquisition espagnole, 1551, 1554, 1559* (Librairie Droz, 1984). No one has found Bujanda’s exemplar. For the study showing Cordoni’s dependence on Porete see Stanislaw da Campagnola, ‘Bartolomeo Cordoni da Città di Castello e le due primi edizioni del suo ‘Dialogo’, Boll. deput. Storia patria Umbria 80 (1983 [published 1985]), 89-152.

Northern European (Low Countries) beguine burned at the stake as a relapsed heretic. Cordoni “hid” Porete’s “revelations” among excerpts from Joachite Franciscan *spirituali* texts, popular in Spain, including Arnau of Vilanova and Ubertino de Casale. Alvaro Castro Sánchez briefly links the 16<sup>th</sup> circulation of Franciscan texts, such as the *Via Spiritus*, with the ideas of Porete (and seemingly Cordoni), though he claims the lines of transmission among members of early modern religious orders, such as the new “Spanish” Jesuits, to be indirect, assuming incorrectly that no Hispanic version of Porete has been found.<sup>16</sup> Revisiting this milieu can therefore allow us to add an “early modern” Franciscan element to Robert E. Lerner’s discussion of Porete’s text (and therefore implicitly also our Cordoni’s) and the treatise *Schwester Katrei* as the persecuted scriptures of what became known as the “heresy of the free spirit” condemned at the Council of Vienne (1312).<sup>17</sup> At the time he did not find any evidence that would have led him to “to subsume Cisalpine areas into a history of northern Free Spirits”<sup>18</sup> or going much further than the fourteenth century “since, [he claimed], by the end of the fifteenth century the doctrines of the Free Spirit were known only to encyclopedists and antiquarians.”<sup>19</sup> But if we follow Lerner in considering the free spirit movement, not as a distinctive sect, but as a “‘free-spirit style’ of affective mysticism particularly congenial to thirteenth century religious women” then their history has a sequel.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Álvaro Castro Sánchez, *Franciscanos, místicos, herejes y alumbrados* (Servicio de Publicaciones, Universidad de Córdoba, 2010) 199.

<sup>17</sup> R. E Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (University of California Press, 1972).

<sup>18</sup> Lerner, 8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 242.

<sup>20</sup> Robert E. Lerner, “Introduction” to Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* (Indiana : University of Notre Dame Press, 1995). Marina Benedetti offers a different take on the heresy of the free spirit, integrating the followers of Guglielma di Milano into the story. More recent work on Guglielma by Barbara Newman strengthened my decision to trace this ‘free-spirit style’ of affective mysticism particularly congenial to thirteenth century religious women. I am grateful to Kevin Madigan, for the Guglielma reference. Marina Benedetti, *Io non sono Dio: Guglielma di Milano e i Figli dello Spirito santo* (Biblioteca francescana, 1998); *Milano 1300: I Processi Inquisitoriali Contro Le Devote E I Devoti Di Santa Guglielma*, Milano Medievale 2 (Milano: Libri Scheiwiller : Fondazione Stelline, 1999); B. Newman, “The Heretic Saint: Guglielma of Bohemia, Milan, and

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This dissertation extends and defends the thesis I introduced in my first published article discussing controversial mystical works that I later discovered to textually integrate Porete/Cordoni's, works associated in early modern Spain with an affective mysticism popular among religious women. In the article I argued that

[i]n the last decades of the sixteenth century the Society of Jesus prohibited its members the reading of several mystical texts. A theme that cuts across these texts is the use of erotic language to describe the relationship between the soul and God. I argue that behind the prohibition lies the fear that erotic desire would be a threat to a Jesuit masculine identity.

Here I re-frame the inquiry, dividing it into four sections. I first introduce the project's historical framework by presenting some of the medieval sources prohibited in the edict, those that illustrate the "'free-spirit style' of affective mysticism particularly congenial to thirteenth century religious women" that served as kindling for the later ignition of Hispanic Jesuit mysticism. I do so first in my article published as "Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*" *Harvard Theological Review* (January 2010).<sup>21</sup> A second question gives us the topic for our second chapter concluding our "late medieval" framework up until 1540, the year Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus. In the latter I begin to answer the former essay's still unresolved dilemma, now a thread to follow throughout the dissertation: In the future we may be able to explain the doctrinal similarities between Porete and the 17<sup>th</sup> century theological controversies that led to the modern "crisis of mysticism."<sup>22</sup> How, and why, did the medieval language of annihilation and deification haunt Europe even during the throes that gave birth to modernity?

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Brunate," *Church History* 74, no. 01 (2005): 1–38; B. Newman, "Agnes of Prague and Guglielma of Milan," *The Yale Guide to Medieval Holy Women*, Eds. Alastair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005) (n.d.).

<sup>21</sup> <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=7009404>

<sup>22</sup> Hollywood, 263; McGinn, *Flowering*, ix.

I first note that many of the prohibited texts are either Franciscan or from the same milieu as those discussed next and in a recent collection *Late Medieval Mysticism of the Low Countries*.

The editors of these treatises and sermons notice that:

several sources of Late Medieval Mysticism seem to merge in these sermons. Influences from an the “essential” mysticism of Eckhart, the bridal and Trinitarian mysticism of Ruusbroec, the unassuming mysticism of Leberecht Tauler, and the negative mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite can be clearly traced. This distinct synthesis of several mystical currents quite unexpectedly starts to blossom from the early decades of sixteenth century.... The cultural and historical circumstances that contributed to this rebirth of mysticism also need to be analyzed in detail. A promising research perspective is the relation of this mystical renaissance to the Counter-Reformation activities of the Cologne Carthusians and the then-new Jesuit order.<sup>23</sup>

This leads me to undertake this promising research perspective by arguing that we must include Cordoni, the first Franciscans and Jesuits as part of a vast underground network that Kerby-Fulton barely uncovers when she links the Cisalpine areas with the Northern areas as far as England and into the 15th century throughout her *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England*.<sup>24</sup> In section such as “ ‘Through the hiding of books’: The Codicological Evidence for Joachimite Franciscanism,” “The M.N. losses to Porete’s Mirror and the Question of Insular Suspicion,” and “Carthusian Spirituality and the Toleration of ‘Left-Wing Orthodoxy,’ ” Kerby-Fulton discusses how medieval monastic religious orders would conceal “left-wing orthodox” texts such as the above written by authors under suspicion, authors that, disguised as patristic writers and others of unimpeachable authority included not only Northern European women mystics, such as Marguerite Porete, but also Franciscan Spirituals. Thus the recent recovery of texts like Cordoni, those discussed by Kerby-Fulton and those discussed in this collection suggests

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<sup>23</sup> *Late Medieval Mysticism of the Low Countries*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 2008), 350.

<sup>24</sup> Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Press, 2006), 272-296.

that an examination of the cultural and historical circumstances that contributed to this mystical renaissance would be fruitful. Accordingly, in this chapter I seek to address these questions about mysticism throughout a “long sixteenth century,” through an exploration of the “late medieval” background of the Catholic Reformation/Counter Reformation synthesis of several mystical currents converging in the proto-Jesuit *spirituali*.

I introduce the “early modern” context of our topic in Chapter 2, “The Early Society of Jesus and the Transmission of Beguine and Franciscan Theology in the Early Modern Hispanic World( article in progress).” This chapter traces the fate of Porete’s Mirror through Cordoni’s Catalan edition up to the 1540’s birth of the Society of Jesus in order to bring us to the rarely studied Hispanic side of an early modern “left-wing orthodox” Hispanic-Italian religious elite named *spirituali*, sometimes known as evangelicals, those who shared the Protestant Reformation’s doctrine of salvation by faith alone without the need for works, yet who did not seek schism with Roman Catholicism.<sup>25</sup> Since these *spirituali* which did not emerge as clear victors in Renaissance

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<sup>25</sup>Most scholars have traced the group to Italy, linking it with the forgotten side of Italian Protestantism. For the latest work see Giorgio Caravale, *Forbidden Prayer: Church Censorship and Devotional Literature in Renaissance Italy* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, 2012), 272-296. I here follow for the Spanish reformations the one exception we find in M. Anne Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations, C.1535-c.1585* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008). John Jeffries Martin’s *Venice’s Venice’s Hidden Enemies: Italian Heretics in a Renaissance City* preserves the mythological Jesuit as papalist militant but otherwise serves as an important reminder that the Italian Inquisition ordered the burning of several of the *spirituali* themselves. We should add this happened *despite* Jesuit intervention thus their need to practice what Calvin called “nicodemism,” after the disciple Nicodemus who came to Christ but only at night; that is, the need to conceal “their own beliefs and convictions, to exercise discretion when discussing the books they read, equally to keep quote about their relationships with others suspected of heresy....”, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). Studies linking the *spirituali* to humanist Valdés sometimes remember to discuss his Spanish humanist background. The best one is Massimo Firpo “Entre Alumbrados Y “Espirituales”: Estudios Sobre Juan De Valdés Y El Valdesianismo En La Crisis Religiosa Del ‘500 Italiano, Serie C--Monografías t. 26 (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2000) and Daniel A Crews, *Twilight of the Renaissance: The Life of Juan De Valdés* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). Paolo Simoncelli, *Eterodossia Religiosa e Dissidenza Politica Agli Inizi Dell’età Moderna: Appunti Dalle Lezioni Di Storia Moderna Dell’anno Accademico 1988-89* (Cacucci, 1989); P. Simoncelli, “Nuove Ipotesi e Studi sul Beneficio Di Cristo,” *Critica Storica* 12 (1975): 320–388; P. Simoncelli, “Inquisizione Romana e Riforma in Italia,” *Rivista Storica Italiana* 100 (1988): 5–125; Massimo Firpo, *Inquisizione Romana E Controriforma: Studi Sul Cardinal Giovanni Morone (1509-1580) E Il Suo Processo D’eresia*, Nuova ed. riv. e ampliata. (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2005); Massimo Firpo, *Disputar Di Cose Pertinente Alla Fede: Studi Sulla Vita*



Europe, falling somewhere in the blurry line between Counter-Reformation humanism and Protestant evangelicalism, few scholars have studied this “Italian,” humanism group led by an English Cardinal, Reginald Pole; even fewer have linked it to French evangelicals and patron of humanist Queen Marguerite of Navarre, and almost none have remembered its Hispanic origins. We will trace its fate through various circles of spirituali that end up forming *one* network, a network of readers of mystical books such as Cordonì’s *Dialogue*, readers of royal heritage who became patrons of the new ‘reformed’ Franciscan orders that included the Jesuits as Joachimite *virì spirituali*, patrons who were mostly women inspired by Queen Marguerite de Navarre.<sup>26</sup> The term *spirituali* reveals that they haven’t been connected yet to the Hispanic *espirituales* or wondered whether they share something in common with Jesuit humanists and other religious that Teresa of Avila describes as *espirituales*, spiritual daughter of Francis Borgia.<sup>27</sup> Constance Furey does not include the Jesuit

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*Religiosa Del Cinquecento Italiano*, Early Modern 17 (Milano: UNICOPLI, 2003); Massimo Firpo, *Dal Sacco Di Roma all’Inquisizione: Studi Su Juan De Valdés E La Riforma Italiana*, *Forme e Percorsi Della Storia* 3 (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’orso, 1998); Salvatore Caponetto, *The Protestant Reformation in Sixteenth-century Italy* (Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999); P. Simoncelli, *Evangelismo Italiano Del Cinquecento: Questione Religiosa e Nicodemismo Politico* (Istituto storico italiano per l’età moderna e contemporanea, 1979); P. Simoncelli, *Il Caso Reginald Pole: Eresia e Santità Nelle Polemiche Religiose Del Cinquecento* (Ed. di storia e letteratura, 1977);

<sup>26</sup> For Marguerite of Navarre as “late medieval reader” see G. Hasenhor, “La Tradition Du Miroir Des Simples Âmes Au XVe Siècle: De Marguerite Porète († 1310) à Marguerite De Navarre,” *Comptes-rendus Des Séances De l’année...-Académie Des Inscriptions Et Belles-lettres* 143, no. 4 (1999): 1347–1366; S. Kocher, “Marguerite De Navarre’s Portrait of Marguerite Porete: A Renaissance Queen Constructs a Medieval Woman Mystic,” in *Medieval Feminist Forum*, vol. 26, 1998, 7; *The Prisons of Marguerite De Navarre* (Reading: Whiteknights, 1989); John Parkin, *The Humor of Marguerite De Navarre in the Heptaméron: A Feminist Author Before Her Time* (Lewiston, N.Y: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); Barbara Stephenson, *The Power and Patronage of Marguerite De Navarre* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, 2004); Wes Williams, *Pilgrimage and Narrative in the French Renaissance: The Undiscovered Country* (Oxford University Press, 1998); Patricia Francis Cholakian, *Rape and Writing in the Heptaméron of Marguerite De Navarre*, *Ad Feminam* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991). For Marguerite of Navarre as “Evangelical Protestant” patron see Jonathan A Reid, *King’s Sister--Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549) and Her Evangelical Network* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). For a more For Marguerite of Navarre as more of a “Reformed Catholic” patron see Barbara Stephenson, *The Power and Patronage of Marguerite De Navarre* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, 2004). For Vittoria Colonna and the spirituali see Abigail Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics of the Italian Reformation* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008); *Ibid.*; Maria Forcellino, *Michelangelo, Vittoria Colonna e gli “spirituali”: religiosità e vita artistica a Roma negli anni Quaranta* (Viella, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> Enrique García Hernán, Francisco De Borja, Grande De España (Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnanim, 1999); Juan de Borja y Enríquez (duque de Gandía) and Enrique García Hernán, *Sanctus Franciscus Borgia: quartus Gandiae dux et Societatis Iesu praepositus generalis tertius, 1510-1572* (A. Avrial, 2003); J.L. Pastor Zapata, “La

humanist nevertheless she insightfully recognizes that “no matter whether these Catholics are described as Christian humanists, *spirituali*, or part of the movement of evangelism, it is generally agreed that they failed to influence the Church in their own day.”<sup>28</sup> Recovering these Jesuits’ ‘failed,’ unheard voices forms an integral part of this dissertation’s task.

Chapter 3, “*Masculine*” *Militarism and “Feminine” Tears in Ignatius’ Mysticism*, to be published in the *Journal of Men, Masculinities, and Spiritualities*, introduces as this dissertation’s “early modern” framework the Spanish spiritual context that Ignatius of Loyola shared with Cordoni and which led to compose the Society of Jesus’ foundational texts, the *Institute* and the *Spiritual Exercises*, and his own mystical texts, *A Pilgrim’s Testament or Autobiography* and the *Spiritual Diary*.<sup>29</sup> Contrasting these short but suggestive texts reveal a tension in Ignatius between Ignatius’ masculine ideal for Jesuits as “soldiers of God,” and his own affective mysticism inspired by beguines and Franciscans, an annihilatory, affective, mysticism which will be after his death gendered as “feminine.”

I continue in *Kindling Jesuit Mysticism*, with articles including “A Beguine’s Specter: A Beguine Spectre Marguerite Porete (†1310), Achille Gagliardi (†1607), and Their Collaboration across Time” and “On confusion and on prayer: St Francisco Borja (1510-1572)” both published

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biblioteca de Don Juan de Borja tercer Duque de Gandía (1543),” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 61, no. 122 (1992): 275–308; Cruz Martínez Esteruelas, *Francisco De Borja, El Nieto Del Escándalo*, 1st ed, *Memoria de la historia* (Barcelona, España: Planeta, 1988); Josep Piera, *Francesc De Borja: El Duc Sant*, 1st ed. (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> *Erasmus, Contarini, and the Religious Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 5. For other terminological problems see Brundin, xii.

<sup>29</sup> I consulted all the known primary sources about Ignatius. Ignatius’ texts, in their original languages, can be found in the digital collection *Polanco: the Writings of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: The Works* (opera), the Letters (epistolae) (St. Louis, Mo: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996). I have also consulted the following biographies and biographical studies, beginning with the earliest: *Pedro de Ribadeneyra, Vita Ignatii Loiolae, Societatis Iesu Fvndatoris, Libris Qvinqve Comprehensa. In Quibus Initia Ipsius Societatis, Ad Annum Usq. Domini 1556 Explicantur* (Neapoli: Apud Iosephum Cacchium, 1572); *Pedro de Ribadeneyra, Vida del P. Ignacio de Loyola fundador de la ... Compañia de Jesus* (por Alonso Gomez Impressor de su Magestad, 1583).

recently in *The Way: A Journal of Christian Spirituality Published by the British Jesuits*.<sup>30</sup> Reading a selection from the prohibited medieval texts side by side with examples from Jesuits' own readings will illustrate the first part of the dissertation's thesis. It will argue that medieval spirituality offered Ignatius and the Jesuit of the first generation a way to deal with the loss of erotic attachments required by Ignatius' ideal of Jesuit masculinity. Its study of these Jesuits' mystical language of annihilation and deification shows that medieval spirituality offered Jesuits of the first generation an affective way to deal with loss and longing, mourning and melancholia. It thus concludes by showing that an at first influential "affective way," exemplified by the edict's list and reflecting the popularity in Spain of medieval beguine and Franciscan spirituality, was not gendered as "feminine" by its cherishers but transformed into what several Jesuits inspired by their relationship with women identified as the essence of traditional "mystical theology." [The latter is illustrated with my early article "Teresa of Avila as Student and Teacher of the Dionysian tradition" *Magistra: A Journal of Women's Spirituality in History* (Winter 2007)] It thus concludes our synthesis of several mystical currents, a synthesis ignited and kindled in the "late medieval centuries" up to the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a synthesis that unfortunately turned out to be an ephemeral flame.

Section Three *Extinguishing Jesuit Mysticism* introduces the controversy that erupted after the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Jesuit superiors began becoming suspicious of a "secret (*secreto*)" and "strange (*peregrino*)" way of prayer, one "introduced in the Society, in the province of Castile, through the spiritual teaching, (*espíritu y consejo*) of Mother Teresa of Jesus."<sup>31</sup> Teresa of

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<sup>30</sup> The chapter integrates the following articles: "A Beguine's Spectre: Marguerite Porete's presence in Hispanic-Italian Spirituality" *The Way: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* (forthcoming); "On confusion and on prayer: St Francisco Borja (1510-1572)" *The Way: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* (October 2011) and "Teresa of Avila as Disciple and Teacher of the Dionysian tradition" *Magistra: A Journal of Women's Spirituality in History* Winter 2007."

<sup>31</sup> Baltasar Alvarez, *Escritos Espirituales*, Serie A--Textos t. 4 (Barcelona: J. Flors, 1961).

Avila, spiritual daughter of Francis Borgia, found herself sharing with several Jesuits her mystical way of prayer, including two young Jesuits, Borgia's protégés, who had recently made religious vows at the Gandía novitiate: Antonio Cordeses and Baltasar Alvarez.<sup>32</sup> As we learn in the most recent of the few studies dedicated to the controversy over "The Strange Style of Prayer": Mercurian, Cordeses, and Alvarez," soon after his 1573 election as Borgia's successor, General Everard Mercurian prohibits the provincial at Avila, Antonio Cordeses, from teaching a way of silent prayer called "affective," or of "union of the soul with God."<sup>33</sup> Cordeses' companion and Teresa's confessor, Baltasar Alvarez, also taught this way, as evidenced by the "strange folio (extraño papel)" found by his accusers among his writings to an unnamed "Vuestra Reverencia" assumed to be his spiritual daughter Teresa. Alvarez receives the same sanctions as Cordeses, who then enacts at Avila Mercurian's new tasks, the issuance of an edict banning the reading of popular mystical texts, de facto making them *libros prohibidos*.

Besides Endean's essay, only two other essays have been devoted specifically to the controversy.<sup>34</sup> Aware of its essay's limitations, Endean notices that no study yet has paid attention to the wider historical context. In its third and final section, *Extinguishing Jesuit Mysticism*, this study takes up the task of placing the controversy within its proper historical and cultural context. The few studies addressing the controversy restrict themselves to the intra-order conflict, or even pay attention to the what the main document actually says.

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<sup>32</sup> See Marin, n.8 above.

<sup>33</sup> Alvarez, *Escritos*, 739 and Philip Endean S.J, 'The Strange Style of Prayer': Mercurian, Cordeses, and Alvarez" in *The Mercurian Project: Forming Jesuit Culture, 1573-1580*, 1st ed, Series III--Original Studies, Composed in English no. 18 (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2004). See also Glotin, Edouard SJ, "Actividad en la oración? El jesuita Baltasar Alvarez, confesor de Teresa de Jesús" *Manresa*, LVII (1985), N°223, p. 163-180; and Abad, C. M. "Sobre la lectura indiscreta de escritos místicos" *Manresa* 32. 124 1960/3 207-222.

<sup>34</sup>. Alvarez, *Escritos Espirituales*. Pedro Leturia, *Estudios Ignacianos* (Roma: Institutum Historicum S. I, 1957), 365. See also his "De l'Index: L'ordonnance du P. Mercurian sur l'usage des livres prohibites et son interpretation Lyonnais en 1597." *Recherches de science religieuse* 42 (1951), 86-98.

As Jesuits historians have uncovered, Jesuit superiors of the time were ordered to adapt the list to texts read in their communities. It is at Avila, the regional center of the controversy, where we find the strictest one. There, Jesuit community superiors for the Hispanic provinces issued an expanded version of Mercurian's edict forbidding the reading of several Franciscan and northern European spiritual writers. These were in *addition* to those texts suspected by Spanish and Roman Inquisitors, including those by Franciscans such as Bartolomeo Cordoni, Spanish hermit Palma, and the rector of the Brethren of the Common Life Hendrik Herp (the latter's name appearing only on earlier drafts since it was recently added to Spanish inquisitional lists).<sup>35</sup> The edict orders the burning of heretical authors in the Spanish *Index of Prohibited Books*, while authors appearing only in the Roman Index are to be kept under lock and key as are those not considered heretical, including

Erasmus' works, that is, those not prohibited, and those of Luis Vives, which are to be similarly kept, under lock and key. Rectors can grant permission to read these books, but only by necessity, and only to those highly trusted. Books that contain obscenities, such as Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, Plautus, Terence, Horace, Martial, Ausonius Gallus and Ovid, except *Tristia*, *Ponto*, and *Metamorphosis*, and similar ones, whether in Latin or the vernacular, are to be kept apart. Only those that have been censored can be kept in public. In no way can permission to read them be granted to students, nor to anyone who can be harmed by them. Rectors can allow their reading to highly trusted individuals who would benefit from studying the humanities. Rectors must get rid of Virgil's *Priapeya* and other similar epigrams, they cannot be kept.

Schools and communities must get rid of Ruusbroec's works, Raymond Lull's *Lover and the Beloved* and other spiritual works, Saint Angela of Foligno, Gertrude, Mechthild, the revelations of Saint Bridget, and the book by Melchiodis Art of Serving God, and Tauler; they are not compatible with our Institute. They can be sold, if buyers are found. Works by Heinrich Suso, Savonarola, Osuna's alphabets, the Council of Cologne, Saint John Climacus and Rosetum, are to be kept under lock and key in Toledo, Alcalá, Murcia and Plasencia. Other schools and communities must send them to one of these. They are not gathered because they are bad, but because they are incompatible with our institute.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For a discussion on the importance of Herp for the first Jesuits and its later condemnation see T.H. Martín "Enrique Herp y la Compañía de Jesús" *Manresa* 1972/4, 361-378.

<sup>36</sup> Pedro Leturia, *Estudios Ignacianos* (Roma: Institutum Historicum S. I, 1957), 372.

The discoverer of this list, Pedro de Leturia introduced the question I will answer in this final section. While Leturia assumes that the censorship pagan “obscene” authors require no explanation, he insightfully recognizes that a novel element emerges here, the restrictions on mystical authors.<sup>37</sup> Why did popular mystical books, all of which originated in the same Northern European and Franciscan milieu we have been unearthing, and which Jesuits called “*Myfticae feu Affectivae*” theology, became in 1573 the target of internal censorship?<sup>38</sup>

Endean sums up the answering consensus reached by Leturia and his followers. The onus and blame should be put on the personality of the edict’s issuer General Mercurian, whose decisions Endean then defends.<sup>39</sup> But his short lived generalate barely covers a controversy whose roots, I will argue, are entrenched deep centuries earlier in late medieval controversies over mysticism. No one has noted, that the controversy continued well into the next decades, that before the listing of mystical authors, the edict first condemns two Christian spiritual writers, Erasmus and Vives, and then several “obscene” pagan works, or that, with regards to the female authors, this was the first and only time in Spain they would appear in such a list. All these three elements will prove to be crucial.

We will see that medieval controversies over obscenity, annihilation and deification persisted until the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and even beyond. As early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the university chancellor Jean Gerson condemned beguine authors, including Porete, and their collaborators, Carthusian

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<sup>37</sup> “lo verdaderamente nuevo son las contrapisas que se ponen a los autores místicos” Leturia, “Lecturas asceticas” *Estudios Ignacianos*, 313.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 313. *Las Fuentes De Los Ejercicios Espirituales De San Ignacio. Actas Del Simposio Internacional [Loyola, 15-19 Septiembre 1997]*, 324.

<sup>39</sup> See Endean S.J, ‘The Strange Style of Prayer’: Mercurian, Cordeses, and Alvarez” in *The Mercurian Project*. and Abad, C. M. “Sobre la lectura indiscreta de escritos místicos” *Manresa* 32. 124 1960/3 207-222.

monks copying these beguines' books.<sup>40</sup> Gerson's many treatises warn about indecent books (*libris impudici*) used in the "oh unspeakable horror! ....initiation of [young boys] by impious mothers ... [into] the most obscene (*obscenissimis*) gestures and practices ... as those of Sodom and Gomorrah!"<sup>41</sup> Does this problem reappear among later Jesuits, those who followed Ignatius in taking not St. Francis but Gerson as primary exemplar? Why were influential mystical books re-considered as, in Cordoni's words, "holy, "carnal and bestial, dishonest?"

In the last chapters I trace a change of attitude transition beginning a few year before the death of Ignatius. The latter wrote from his sickbed to Borgia and then to other superiors, that among "ethnic authors, those that are dishonest are not to be read," even when expressing his unusual sympathy for "ethnics" that is "carnal" others.<sup>42</sup> These authors included, as his secretary noted, the works of Erasmus, Vives, Terence or dishonest authors which Fr. Ignatius does not want to

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<sup>40</sup> Jean Gerson and Brian Patrick McGuire, *Jean Gerson : Early Works*, Classics of Western Spirituality. (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 253. For the obscenity debate I found helpful *Obscenity: Social Control and Artistic Creation in the European Middle Ages*, Cultures, Beliefs, and Traditions v. 4 (Leiden [The Netherlands]: Brill, 1998); of York University, *Medieval Obscenities* (Woodbridge: York Medieval, 2006); Leonard Barkan, *Transuming Passion: Ganymede and the Erotics of Humanism* (Stanford University Press, 1991); Armando Maggi, "On Kissing and Sighing: Renaissance Homoerotic Love from Ficino's De Amore and Sopra Lo Amore to Cesare Trevisani's L'impresa (1569)," *Journal of Homosexuality* 49, no. 3-4 (2005): 315-339; Alberto Pérez Gómez, *Polyphilo, or, The Dark Forest Revisited: An Erotic Epiphany of Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992); Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press US, 2000); Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Ingrid de Smet and Philip Ford, *Eros Et Priapus* (Librairie Droz, 1997); Sarah Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 253.

<sup>41</sup>Johannes Gerson, *Opera Omnia* (Georg Olms Verlag AG, 1987), 3, 291.

<sup>42</sup> En los libros de humanidad étnicos no se lea cosa deshonestas; de lo demás podráse seruir la Compañía como de los despojos de Egipto. En los christianos, aunque la obra fuese buena, no se lea quando el autor fuese malo, porque no se le tome affición; y es bien que se determinen en particular los libros que se han de leer y los que no, así en los de humanidad como en las otras facultades. Acerca de los libros de humanidad latinos o griegos, escútese también en las vniuersidades como en los collegios, quanto será possible, de leer a la juuentud ninguno en quien aya cosas que ofendan las buenas costumbres, si no son primero limpiados de las cosas y palabras deshonestas" and "San Pablo, aun á los superio- res temporales y étnicos, manda obedezcan como [á X.o.] de quien toda ordenada potestad desçiende, co[mo escri]be á los ephesios: " Obedite [dominis] carnalibus cum timore et tremore." Ignatius, Letters Number 3304 and 3898, Rome, 1553.

be read... [such as Savonarola] ” and “the dishonest works of Ovid,” authors that a majority of Jesuits kept reading, ignoring Ignatius’ new rules.<sup>43</sup>

...outside of Rome, this rule is not strictly followed, especially if these works have already begun to be read. Even here in Rome these authors are made decent in the following way: From Martial, Horace, and similar authors we take what is dishonest and the rest is left along with their names...we keep the good parts from Erasmus and so on with the other authors.<sup>44</sup>

They did similarly with other humanist authors, which, even when faithful Christian were often linked with “ethnic” Jews. Ethnics (ethnicos), included those who were not of the Christian “pure race (pura raza).” That is, *conversos* from Jewish, Muslim, or colonial descent. Most academic and ecclesiastic authorities of the time traced these groups to biblical tribes that became geographically

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<sup>43</sup> Jesuits advocated successfully for the removal of Erasmus and Savonarola’s Exposition on the Miserere Mei, smuggled from the friar’s prison and published seven times in Spanish, the first one at Montserrat, and twice in French, one by an evangelical spirituali and the other by a Jesuit. Among these Erasmian works we not only find Erasmus’ Modus Orandi and Praise of Folly but also humanist Vives’ On the Duty of Husbands and Passions of the Soul, the latter dedicated to our Francis Borgia. Moreover, Erasmus corresponded with the Borgias, owners of the largest Spanish collection of important Erasmian works and financial supporters of Erasmian publishers, such as Carles Amoros, Cordoni’s publisher. J.L. Pastor Zapata, “La Biblioteca De Don Juan De Borja Tercer Duque De Gandía (1543),” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 61, no. 122 (1992): 275–308. Juan Luis Vives, *Obras Completas* (Madrid: M. Aguilar, 1947); Erasmus in Hispania, Vives in Belgio: Acta Colloquii Brugensis, 23-26 IX 1985, *Colloquia Europalia* 1 (Lovanii: Peeters, 1986); Agustín Andreu, *Loyola y Vives: Cuadro Escénico* (Valencia: Pre-Textos, 1995); P. Graf, *Luis Vives Como Apologeta: Contribución a La Historia De La Apologética* (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto “ Francisco Suárez,,” 1943); Carlos G Noreña, *Juan Luis Vives and the Emotions, Philosophical Explorations* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989); *ibid.*; Juan Luis Vives, *The Passions of the Soul: The Third Book of De Anima Et Vita, Studies in Renaissance Literature v. 4* (Lewiston, N.Y, USA: E. Mellen Press, 1990). For Savonarola we have Girolamo Savonarola, *Deuotissima Expositiō Sobre El Psalmo De Miserere Mei* (A. de Paz, 1547); Girolamo Savonarola, *Prison Meditations on Psalms 51 and 31* (Marquette University Press, 1994); Girolamo Savonarola, *Las Obras Que Se Hallan Romançadas Del Excelente Doctorfray Hieronymo Sauonarola De Ferrara: Lo Contenido Eneste Libro Se Hallara Boluien Do La Hoja* (Martín Nucio, 1550); Girolamo Savonarola, *Selected Writings of Girolamo Savonarola: Religion and Politics, 1490-1498* (Yale University Press, 2006); Garfagnini and Picone, *Verso Savonarola*; Herzig, *Savonarola’s Women*; Benavent i Benavent, *Savonarola y España*; Rodríguez Gómez, Weinstein, and Benavent, *La Figura De Jerónimo Savonarola O.P. y Su Influencia En España y Europa*; L. Riber, “Erasmus, En El’ Indice Paulino’ Con Lulio, Sabunde y Savonarola,” *Boletín De La Real Academia Espa\ Nola* 38, no. 154 (1958): 249; M. Scaduto, “«Laínez e l’Indice Del 1559. Lullo, Sabunde, Savonarola, Erasmo»,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* (n.d.): 3–32.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, 128-30. Not only were these authors popular among students; Christian humanists Erasmus and Vives formed an integral part of the school curriculum that prepared Jesuits for their future ministries. Constance M Furey, *Erasmus, Contarini, and the Religious Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); T. O’Reilly, “Saint Ignatius Loyola and Spanish Erasmianism,” *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 43 (1974) 301 321 (n.d.); Riber, “Erasmus, En El’ Indice Paulino’ Con Lulio, Sabunde y Savonarola”; Scaduto, “«Laínez e l’Indice Del 1559. Lullo, Sabunde, Savonarola, Erasmo»”; Marcel Bataillon, *Erasmus Y España: Estudios Sobre La Historia Espiritual Del Siglo XVI*, 2. ed. en español, corr. y aum, Sección De Obras De Historia (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966); Valenciana Biblioteca, *Humanismo Y Reforma En El S. XVI* (Valencia: Biblioteca Valenciana, 2002).



dispersed tribes after God cursed them. Sometimes they extended the category to include Lutherans and “other Sodomites.” These latter groups purportedly consisted of heretics or apostates once belonging to the Christian race. Yet, as prophesied in Romans 1: 24-27, they “changed the truth of God into a lie... [so] God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.” Gil Gonzales Dávila elsewhere links the spirituality of these authors with the Franciscan-inspired “excesses at [Borgia’s] Gandía,” whose community members, as his colleagues complained, read assiduously the *Via Spiritus* by Franciscan friar Bernabé de Palma.<sup>45</sup> We could add the case of another *spirituali* friar, Francisco Ortiz, whose works including his commentaries on Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* appeared in print together with Palma’s *Via Spiritus*.<sup>46</sup> These are but a few of the cases that leads to ask: was there a connection between Franciscan *spirituali* and the Erasmian evangelical *spirituali*, one we must approach in terms of race and gender?

We will answer in the affirmative when we note that Jesuit superior Gil Gonzales Dávila addresses Jesuit students at Córdoba, not only a region where Jesuits ministered conversos, but also a region where students seemed to have been inspired by older Jesuits, not only in their reading but in their “smuggling.” We know the edict included implicitly those books prohibited in the Index such as the *Libro de Oración* by one of Borgia’s friends, humanist Luis de Granada. Granada, editor of the

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<sup>45</sup> González Dávila, *Pláticas Sobre Las Reglas De La Compañía De Jesús*, 782.

<sup>46</sup>One of several written by Borgia’s close Franciscan Spiritual counselors, which included both Ortiz and their common friend Franciscan friar Osuna: “anotaciones que el doctor Ortiz y su hermano fray Francisco hizieron sobre los Ejercicios cuya copia esta en un cartapacio que me pidió prestado el Padre Gil Gonzales” C. M Abad, “Unas Anotaciones Inéditas Sobre Los Ejercicios De San Ignacio, Compuestas Por El Dr. Pedro Ortiz y Su Hermano Fray Francisco,” *Miscelánea Comillas* 14, no. 25 (1956): 25–114. Francisco (de Osuna, *Primera Parte Del Libro Llamado Abecedario Spiritual: Que Trata De Las Circunstancias De La Sagrada Pasión Del Hijo De Dios* (por Juan Cro[m]berger, 1528); Francisco de Osuna, *Abecedario Espiritual* (Junta, 1544); Francisco de Osuna, *Tercer Abecedario Espiritual: Estudio Histórico y Edición Crítica*, Biblioteca De Autores Cristianos (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1972); de Ros Fidèle, *Un Maître De Saint Thérèse: Le Père François d’Osuna: Sa Vie, Son Œuvre, Sa Doctrine Spirituelle* (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1936).

prohibited Climacus, dedicated his book to Antonio de Córdoba, in gratitude for copying and spreading devotional by two spirituali, Juan de Valdés and the *converso* bishop of Navarre, Bartolomé Carranza.<sup>47</sup> The leading authority on the latter, Jesuit Ignacio Tellechea, has shown that Carranza's Jesuit students, including Córdoba, smuggled some controversial writings, such as those of Tauler's *Instituciones* and humanist *spirituali* Johannes Gropper, specially the Council of Cologne, the basis for Carranza's condemned Spiritual Catechism.<sup>48</sup> Given this, Marcel Bataillon assumes that when Córdoba was caught smuggling texts and had to destroy his copies, these were by Protestant authors, but I consulted Gropper's "pseudo-Protestant writings" and these included texts by authors like Bernard of Clairvaux.<sup>49</sup> This, and Dávila's mention of commentaries makes me prefer Freitas Carvalho's assumption that he smuggled works translated in France by Lefevre D'Étaples, the humanist editor associated with the French *spirituali*.<sup>50</sup>

D'Étaples edited Ruusbroec, Raymond Lull, and several women authors of texts used as "commentaries" to Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, including Gertrude of Helfta, whose *Exercicia Spiritualia* the first Jesuits read together with the "revelations" of Northern European women such as Mechthild of Magdeburg, Mechthild of Hackeborn, and Bridget of Sweden. As we will see, D'Étaples joined Carthusians and other monastics who translated Bridget's *Revelationes* into several

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<sup>47</sup> Granada *Peregrine Chemin* Bataillon, *Erasmus Y España*, 588.

<sup>48</sup> José Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, *Fray Bartolomé Carranza De Miranda: Investigaciones Históricas* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, Departamento de Educación y Cultura, 2002); Bartolomé Carranza and José Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, *Fray Bartolomé Carranza : Documentos Históricos*, Archivo Documental Español ; T. 18-19, 22, 30 Pts. 1-2, 33, 34 [bis] (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1962); José Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, *Sábado Espiritual y Otros Ensayos Carrancianos*, Bibliotheca Salmanticensis. Estudios ; 90 (Salamanca): Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1987).

<sup>49</sup> I consulted the edition held at Harvard Law School's library, its Rare Roman Catholic Church Books Collection. It is listed as Johannes Gropper et al, *Canones Concilii Provincialis Coloniensis ...* (Parisiis: Apud Audoënum Paruum in via s. Iacobi, sub insigni Lillii, 1550); Tellechea Idígoras, *Sábado Espiritual y Otros Ensayos Carrancianos*; Tellechea Idígoras, *Fray Bartolomé Carranza De Miranda*.

<sup>50</sup> José Adriano Moreira de Freitas Carvalho, *Gertrudes De Helfta E Espanha: Contribuição Para Estudo Da História Da Espiritualidade Peninsular Nos Séculos XVI E XVII*, Textos De Literatura 5 (Porto: Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica, 1981).

languages, including Spanish dialects. In the case of Bridget, he joins those Catalanian beguines who shared a tradition of being in contact with Bridget and their disciples, a tradition they used to explain their veneration for not only the texts but also the relics of Bridget held at the time by one of them. He does so in collaboration with the Carthusian and Jesuits mentioned above; Carthusians translated Bridget's texts into the vernacular, including Spanish, for some of the nuns belonging to the Bridgettine order sought refuge in what would become Spain; thus another link between mystical "smuggling" networks and Jesuits.<sup>51</sup>

Historian Melquiades Andrés Martín brings together the edict's Northern European spiritual writers with the Franciscan ones, Angela of Foligno and Francisco de Osuna, as part of the Spanish movement of *recogimiento*, not only led primarily by even describing the Gandía community as Jesuit *recogidos*, practitioners of a heavily Franciscan spirituality aligned with the *devotio moderna* and described in the terms of the time as "affective," or belonging to an "affective Dionysian" spirituality.<sup>52</sup> He contrasts the later Jesuits with those Jesuits at Gandía, who could easily find excerpts from all these authors, and others much more close to medieval affective Dionysianism, in the multi-volume *Rosetum* or *Roseraie de exercises spirituels* by *devotio moderna* author Jean

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<sup>51</sup> D' Étapes et al, *Liber Trium Vivorum & Trium Spiritualium Virginum*; Ruusbroec and Martín, *Obras*; Ruusbroec, *De Ornatu Spiritualium Nuptiarum*; Jan Van Ruusbroec; Jan, D. *Ioannes Rusbrochii ... Opera Omnia ...*; Hackeborn) and Great), *Speculum Spiritualis Gratiae Ac Mirabilium Reuelationum Sacris Virginibus Mechtildis Ac Gertrudis. Monalium Cenobii Helffede Prae Saluberrima in Christo Praeficientium Instructione Comportatus*; Alonso and Bernard, *Arte Para Servir a Dios, Compuesto Por Fray Alonso De Madrid, Con El Espejo De Illustres Personas, y Una Epistola De Sant Bernardo, Dela Perfeccion Dela Vida Espiritual. Añadiose Tambien El Memorial Dela Vida De Iesu Christo.*; Carvalho, *Gertrudes De Helfta E Espanha*; *Prophets Abroad*; Carvalho, *Gertrudes De Helfta E Espanha*. See Montero, 84-95, 99. The Jesuit connection with Bridgettines seems to have never been studied. I became aware of it by consulting Houghton Library's *Relacion Que Embiaron Las Religiosas Del Monesterio De Sion De Inglaterra: Que Estauan En Roan De Francia, Al Padre Roberto Personio De La Compañia De Iesus: De Su Salida De Aquella Ciudad, Y Llegada A Lisboa De Portugal* (En Madrid: Por la biuda de P. Madrigal, 1594); Christopher De Hamel and Club Roxburghe, *Syon Abbey: The Library of the Bridgettine Nuns and Their Peregrinations After the Reformation: An Essay* (Otley [England]: Printed for The Roxburghe Club, 1991); *Prophets Abroad*; Ross Fuller, *The Brotherhood of the Common Life and Its Influence*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

<sup>52</sup> Boyd Taylor Coolman, "The Medieval Affective Dionysian Tradition," *Re-Thinking Dionysius the Areopagite* (Chichester, U.K: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

Mombaer.<sup>53</sup> Besides most of the medieval authors we find affective texts by authors like Bonaventure, Bernard of Clairvaux, Richard of St. Victor, authors that Mombaer read as affective in the sense that they could help inflame an exercitant's love from the lowest stages to the highest ones, which he categorizes as "carnal, sentimental, natural, social, and spiritual."<sup>54</sup> Even more surprising, some vernacular versions of Climacus were confused with the Franciscan laywoman Angela of Foligno, perhaps because both authors were among the very first authors published by Cisneros, not long before Cordoni's arrival, insinuating thus a thread begging to be unraveled.<sup>55</sup>

Having read several of the edict's prohibited texts, first, in their original medieval context, and then in the early modern one by Jesuits spirituali, we will be able to see now how their development of medieval doctrines of mystical union attained through annihilation and deification, *alluded to by Dávila's passage above criticizing "annihilations and unions without intermediary,"* can serve as illustration of the kind of mysticism later superiors criticized. To do so I introduce the section *Extinguishing Jesuit Mysticism* with chapter 5, first published as "Heterosexual Melancholia and Mysticism in the Early Society of Jesus" (*Theology and Sexuality* Jan 2007). As the project's seminal article, it states concisely many of the findings of previous chapters. It foreshadows later

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<sup>53</sup> I consulted Houghton's Library Jan Mombaer and Pieter van Os, *Rosetu[m] Exercitioru[m] Sp[irit]ualiu[m]* (Zwolle: Pieter van Os), 1494).

<sup>54</sup>"carnalis, cupida, natur, social, quoque spiri, Pierre Debongnie, *Jean Mombaer De Bruxelles, Abbé De Livry: Ses Écrits Et Ses Réformes*, (Louvain,: Librairie universitaire, Uystpruyst; [etc. etc.], 1927), 27.

<sup>55</sup> Juan Clímaco (Santo) and Luis de Granada ((O.P.)), *Escala Espiritual Del Paraiso Del Glorioso P. y Doctor Eximio S. Juan Climaco ...* (s.n, 1727); *Giovanni Climaco E Il Sinai: Atti Del IX Convegno Ecumenico Internazionale Di Spiritualità Ortodossa, Sezione Bizantina, Bose, 16-18 Settembre 2001*, Spiritualità Orientale (Magnano (BI): Edizioni Qiqajon, Comunità di Bose, 2002). Angela de Foligno (Santa), *Liber Qui Dicitur Angela De Fulginio, in Quo Ostendit. Nobi Vera via Qua Possum[us] Sequi Vestigia Nostri Redemptoris* (Petrus Hagenbach, 1505); Angela (de Fulginio), *Libro Utile ... Nel Quale Si Contiene La Conversione, Penitentia Et Divine Consolationi*, 1536; *Il Liber Della Beata Angela Da Foligno: Edizione in Fac Simile E Trascrizione Del Ms. 342 Della Biblioteca Comunale Di Assisi, Con Quattro Studi* (Spoleto (Perugia): Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 2009); *Complete Works*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1993); *Angela Da Foligno E Il Suo Culto*, La Mistica Cristiana Tra Oriente e Occidente 6 (Firenze: SISMEI edizioni del Galluzzo, 2006); J. ANNE, "Transgendering the Mystical Voice: Angela De Foligno, San Juan, Santa Teresa, Luisa De Carvajal," *Echoes and Inscriptions: Comparative Approaches to Early Modern Spanish Literatures* (2000): 127; G. T. Ahlgren, "Angela of Foligno and Teresa of Avila: Ecstatic Sisters," in *International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI*, 2004.

revisions of its thesis via its argument claiming that medieval mysticism offered Jesuits of what I now call the first generation an erotic discourse that served as a space to deal with loss and longing in a relationship with a human/divine Other even when struggling with gestating masculine ideals in the infant Society of Jesus and the infant Spanish empire. These Jesuits' engagements with gendered alterity leads us then to the second generation.

As proposed in the project's prospectus, I then re-state and develop the earlier thesis presented in Chapter 5 through my article in progress, and under consideration by the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, "A 16th century Jesuit controversy over a strange (*extraño*, *peregrino*) way of prayer?" Exploring subsequent events and illuminating them with "second generation" Gil Gonzales Dávila (SJ)'s *Pláticas*, those "chats" to novices written by the superior in charge of explaining the prohibition, this chapter argues that behind the prohibition lies the fear that erotic desire would become a threat to Jesuit masculine identity. A mystical spirituality perceived as heterodox became linked with women, foreigners, racial minorities, and those identified by Jesuits and others as sodomites. We thus move from Jesuit microcosmos to Hispanic macrocosmos, links emerging between the 1573 edict against mysticism, the 1599 decree against the admission of racial minorities, the de-emphasis on the importance of women's ministry, and the condemnation of erotic interpretations of Christian bridal language as potentially moving Jesuits too close to feminized racial undesirables.

The dissertation's last section, *Reviving Jesuit Mysticism*, consists of two final chapters addressed primarily to a Roman Catholic theological and ministerial audience. It explores the aftermath of 1599 and its impact on the ministry of Jesuits who, living in the margins and borderlands of the Hispanic empire, were able to preserve in their writings the tradition of Hispanic Jesuit mysticism especially its approach to erotic desire welcoming the human and divine Other.

Chapter 7, "A Jesuit Mystic's Feminine Melancholia," re-published as Joseph Gelfer ed. *Best of the Journal of Men, Masculinities, and Spirituality* Gorgias Press 2010, 21-39, revises my essay on the mysticism of exorcist Jean-Joseph Surin, suggests that the depression from which he suffered can be understood as a destabilization of the masculine identity he wished to uphold when his experience was dismissed as "feminine melancholia." By incorporating the suffering of two women he is led into a fluid state in which his relation to the divine will become erotic. The inquiry temporarily concludes by juxtaposing a feminist psychoanalyst view on melancholia with Surin's, bringing into a dialogue these two perspectives.

The final chapter first appeared as "Antonio Ruiz de Montoya's Mystical Theology: Contemplation and Action in the Early Jesuit Mission to Peru and Paraguay" Philip Endean SJ and Paul Nicholson SJ eds. *The Way* Vol 47 no. 3 (July 2008). We find that, as the editor's abstract encapsulates:

The Jesuit missionaries to Peru and their indigenous converts in the sixteenth century espoused a mystical theology which strengthened them in their ministry in a hard and challenging environment, according to the charism of contemplation in action. This article examines the lives of two Peruvian Jesuits and how they lived out this charism.

This article and the previous one offer two cases where the discussed Hispanic Jesuit mysticism not only survived but was revived by Jesuits who briefly subverted masculinist melancholia through the integration of erotic desire for a human other into service to outcasts. In this way they re-interpreted human erotic desire as the divine erotic desire that energized their vocation to Jesuit ministry. These chapters include the first translation into English of selections of Jesuit mystical texts including the one that gives us the dissertation's title, Ruiz de Montoya's "*Silex del Divino Amor*." In conjunction with the concluding chapters they serve as a final example showing how, even if for an ephemeral moment, Jesuit mystics emanated human light and warmth with a flame ignited by a firestone of divine love.

# Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*

Juan Marin  
*Harvard University*

In 1309 ecclesiastical leaders condemned as heresy Marguerite Porete's rejection of moral duty, her doctrine that "the annihilated soul is freed from the virtues."<sup>1</sup> They also condemned her book, the *Mirror of Simple Souls*, which includes doctrines associated decades earlier with a "new spirit" heresy spreading "blasphemies" such as that "a person can become God" because "a soul united to God is made divine."<sup>2</sup> In his study, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit*, Robert E. Lerner identifies these two doctrines of annihilation and deification as characteristic of the "free spirit" heresy condemned at the 1311 Council of Vienne. The council claimed that this heresy's sympathizers belonged to an "abominable sect of certain evil men known as beghards and some faithless women called beguines."<sup>3</sup> Lerner found that this group was composed of a disproportionate number of women, including Marguerite Porete. Many of the men were also involved with the group of pious laywomen known as beguines.<sup>4</sup> Lerner shows that among those charged with heresy, many sympathized with a "'free-spirit style' of affective mysticism particularly congenial to thirteenth century religious women."<sup>5</sup> He suggests that beguines in particular

<sup>1</sup> Quod anima adnichilata dat licentiam virtutibus. "Paris Condemnation," quoted in Joanne Maguire Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2001) 109.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Modern Library, 2006) 491.

<sup>3</sup> McGinn, "Ad Nostrum," in *Essential Writings*, 493. See also Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> Lerner, *Heresy*, 229, 35.

<sup>5</sup> Lerner, introduction to Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in*

radicalized affective spirituality into what he calls an “*extreme* mysticism.”<sup>6</sup> Here I wish to follow Lerner’s suggestion that we ought to search for the roots of Porete’s doctrines among the beguines. I will argue that distinctive doctrines of annihilation and deification sprouted from a fertile beguine imagination, one that nourished Porete’s own distinctive and influential ideas in the *Mirror of Simple Souls*.<sup>7</sup> It is among the beguines that we find the first instance in Christianity of a women’s community creating an original form of theological discourse.

### ■ Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology

Readers of Bernard McGinn’s massive multivolume opus on the history of Christian mysticism may have noticed something peculiar. Whenever he describes a mystical doctrine using adjectives such as “strong” or “daring,” either he is referring to a doctrine taught by a woman mystic or, if it is taught by a man, he somehow connects it to one taught by a woman.<sup>8</sup> To mention one example, in the case of Johannes Tauler’s radical ideas about divine union, McGinn concludes: “Tauler’s rich teaching on the mutual abyss of love . . . is scarcely conceivable without the profound and daring teaching about union with God first advanced by the women mystics of the thirteenth century.”<sup>9</sup> Tauler was heavily influenced by Meister Eckhart, who, as Amy Hollywood has shown, appropriated ideas from beguines

*the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Lerner, *Heresy*, 61 [italics mine].

<sup>7</sup> In this I am revisiting some of the ground already covered by Robert E. Lerner in his “The Image of Mixed Liquids in Late Medieval Mystical Thought,” *Church History* 40 (1971) 403. Lerner’s focus is on blurring the line between orthodox and heretical uses of liquid imagery. I will extend the discussion to include beguine authors and their relation to Porete. For Porete’s relation to other medieval authors, especially concerning her nobility motif, see Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation*, 1–26.

<sup>8</sup> Among the many examples that I cannot discuss here we find that “Jacopone da Todi’s daring formulations regarding overwhelming love, divine nothingness, and a state of sinlessness beyond all willing suggest interesting comparisons with Angela of Foligno (whose work he may well have known), as well as with the French beguine, Marguerite Porete, with whom he could not have been familiar” (Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism* [New York: Crossroad, 1998] 127). McGinn also finds “daring” expressions in the post-Eckhart fourteenth-century *Theologia Deutsch*, which brings the text close to “the radical mystical oneing found in mystics like Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart” (Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany* [New York: Crossroad, 2005] 402). I cannot argue for, but hope to indirectly illuminate here, how all these can be traced to the beguines’ influence on Franciscan male “beguines” such as Jacopone da Todi and on the *Theologia Deutsch* via Eckhart. Two women I originally planned to discuss here are Angela of Foligno, whose language of annihilation McGinn describes as “radical,” and Na Prous Boneta, whose claim to divinization not only “must have astonished and horrified” her orthodox examiners, but was part of a “message more dangerous than anything found among the northern Beguines” (McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, 124, 183).

<sup>9</sup> Bernard McGinn, “The Abyss of Love: The Language of Mystical Union among Medieval Women,” in *The Joy of Learning and the Love of God: Studies in Honor of Jean Leclercq* (ed. E. Rozanne Elder; Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1995) 113.



Mechthild of Magdeburg and Marguerite Porete. All three mystics claim that “the soul herself can and must be refigured or reimagined, and as such become united without distinction in and with the divine. The *radicalness* of this claim . . . separates the beguines and Eckhart from most of their contemporaries.”<sup>10</sup> Proponents of this radical theology—what Lerner calls “extreme mysticism”—include beguines such as Hadewijch, who described mystical visions and authored poems in which, as McGinn tells us, “strong expressions of identity with God occur.”<sup>11</sup> McGinn discusses Hadewijch’s and other beguines’ distinctive expressions in essays on mystical images such as the abyss and the ocean.<sup>12</sup> He finds that while these images originated in patristic sources, they reached a peak of profound and daring originality among the beguines. In the latter’s writing they are used as metaphors for both union with God and the immensity of the beguines’ desire for such union.

Porete shares these traditional mystical images, but she is also acknowledged as the creator of a distinctive and original theology of annihilation. Joanne Maguire Robinson, in her study on Marguerite Porete’s theology of annihilation, tells us that “the doctrine of annihilation of the soul was never a mainstream theological doctrine before or after Marguerite Porete, yet it reveals profound insights into the possible relationship between God and the soul.”<sup>13</sup> I will show that many of these profound insights about mystical annihilation are indebted to those beguine theological speculations that McGinn charts through the use of abyssal and liquid metaphors. If I am correct, beguine speculations also contributed to the formation of Porete’s doctrine of deification, thus supporting Kent Emery’s claim against Jean Orcibal that one “need not look towards the ‘glow of the Christian Orient’ to account for basic elements of Margaret’s doctrine of deification.”<sup>14</sup> Emery, however, differs from Orcibal only in de-emphasizing Eastern influence. Both see the doctrine as borrowed from patristic sources.<sup>15</sup> While the terms may indeed have originated in these sources, Orcibal and Emery ignore the fact that beguine mystics were exploring, developing, and radicalizing these ideas on their own.

We can find the first piece of evidence for this last claim in Sean Field’s essay, cited above, in which he locates the earliest medieval appearance of the term *annihilation* in a thirteenth-century sermon by Franciscan Gilbert of Tournai.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001) 24 [italics mine].

<sup>11</sup> McGinn, “Abyss of Love,” 108.

<sup>12</sup> See *ibid.* and Bernard McGinn, “Ocean and Desert as Symbols of Mystical Absorption in the Christian Tradition,” *JR* 74 (1994) 155–81.

<sup>13</sup> Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation*, xii.

<sup>14</sup> Kent Emery, “Margaret Porete and Her Book,” forward to Margaret Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Edmund Colledge et al.; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999) xxiv.

<sup>15</sup> See Jean Orcibal, “Le Miroir des simples âmes et la ‘secte’ du Libre Esprit,” *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 176 (1969) 35–60.

<sup>16</sup> Sean Field, “Annihilation and Perfection in Two Sermons by Gilbert of Tournai for the Translation of St. Francis,” *Franciscana* (Centro Italiano di Studi Sull’Alto Medioevo Spoleto,

Field speculates about a possible remote and unintended influence of this sermon among beguine communities or even Marguerite Porete specifically.<sup>17</sup> Yet he does not consider the possibility of the opposite direction of influence, which is suggested by Gilbert's writing around 1250:

There are among us women called beguines. Some of them rejoice in new doctrines (*novitatibus*) and thrive in subtleties (*subtilitatibus vident*). They have interpreted the mysteries of scriptures in the vulgar Gallic tongue . . . in a communitarian, irreverent, impudent manner in conventicles, in workhouses, in the streets.<sup>18</sup>

If, as I will suggest, the doctrine of annihilation is one of these *novitates*, then Gilbert's use of the term *annihilation* can be read as his sanitizing the concept of beguine theological accretions. Gilbert uses "annihilation as a concept equivalent to [Franciscan] humility, poverty, and perfection."<sup>19</sup> Perhaps he is counteracting new doctrines, such as Porete's call to liberation from the virtues through annihilation, and thus neutralizing the concept's heretical potential. Whether or not this is the case, Gilbert's passage is crucial to our topic because it is in this "vulgar" theology, developed in a communitarian manner by thirteenth-century beguines, that we first find a radical exploration of mystical union.<sup>20</sup> McGinn has shown how these women explored such union through their metaphorical discourse, exemplified in abyssal and liquid imagery such as that of Hadewijch:

My soul melts away  
In the madness of Love  
The abyss into which she hurls me  
Is deeper than the sea;  
For love's deep new abyss  
Renews my wound.<sup>21</sup>

We should note here, for further elaboration later, that while today we can only work with written texts, the vernacular language of the poem and the sounds of its Dutch rhyming verses can make us aware of the oral theological tradition behind

1999) 248. My own more recent and extended search came to the same conclusion.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* [translation mine].

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>20</sup> For a beguine history that pays attention to significant linguistic elements see Hans Geybel, *Vulgariter Beghinae* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004). This "vulgar Gallic tongue" is a predecessor of Old French, the vulgar piccardo in which, as Guarnieri suggests, Porete wrote the lost original text of the *Mirror* (2004, 268). Guarnieri suggests that "French" beguines and Porete would have understood the dialects of beguines such as Beatrice of Nazareth and Hadewijch of Brabant. If Saskia Murk-Jansen's assumption of mutual intelligibility between Dutch and Germanic languages is correct, then all beguine authors I discuss here could have shared a French-Germanic oral background without the need for translation. (Saskia-Murk Jansen, "Hadewijch and Eckhart: Amor Intelligere Est," in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics* [ed. Bernard McGinn; New York: Continuum, 1994] 17)

<sup>21</sup> Hadewijch, *The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980) 145.

it. I suggest that written texts are only auxiliaries to the oral communication needed for a theology done “in conventicles, in workhouses, in the streets.” We will see how aural elements are crucial for Porete, elements she inherits from traditions of oral beguine theology. For now we can extend McGinn’s claim and suggest that while the images exemplified in the poem are used to describe a mystical state of union, we can also read them as describing a mystical experience that goes beyond the stativity implied in “state of union” to encompass a dynamic process of unitive annihilation.

It is not only that the fluidity of movement involved in liquid imagery avoids the necessity of always restricting a mystical experience to a static state. In the poem above, Hadewijch’s mad desire to be hurled into the abyss of love is what leads to her soul being “engulfed” by the abyss and “brought to naught.”<sup>22</sup> These ideas are not unique to Hadewijch, but characteristic of the beguine spirituality we find in the later compilation of Hadewijch’s and other texts, Ruusbroec’s *Vanden XII Beghinen*.<sup>23</sup> There we are introduced to beguines who speak about the desire “to be annihilated and melt together in love” (*te vernieutene ende te versmeltene in minnen*), which drives a soul “to become deiform and transformed into Christ” (*godformich werden ende in Cristo ghetransformeert*).<sup>24</sup> While the terms translated as “annihilation” and “deiformity” are rare, they are connected to the more common “melting” imagery. These texts may be reflecting patristic theology, but they can also be read as composed by those beguines who, as Gilbert complains, “interpreted the mysteries of scriptures in the vulgar Gallic tongue.” Connecting abyssal and liquid imagery from nature to the melting and unitive language of Paul’s Letter to the Philippians results in passages such as these. This is precisely what Hadewijch’s contemporary, Beatrice of Nazareth, did.

We have the option of reading Beatrice of Nazareth, not in light of her beguine heritage, but as an orthodox interpreter of scripture in the tradition of the Cistercian order she later joined. This is how she was read by the author of her Latin biography,

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Jan Van Ruusbroec, *Van Den XII Beghinen* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000). Ruusbroec appropriates the abyssal language but rejects annihilation in *Vanden blinkenden steen*, 10. McGinn argues that Ruusbroec qualifies the beguines’ radical language in order to mitigate its unorthodox potential. *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith: An Ecumenical Dialogue* (ed. Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn; New York: Macmillan, 1989) 79. This leads me to disagree with Paul Verdeyen’s claim that Ruusbroec’s brothers collected his unpublished writings and published them as “The Twelve Beguines.” *Ruusbroec and His Mysticism* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994). For Ruusbroec to be the author would require us to assume not only that he became more radical in his last years, but also that he picked up an interest in astrology. Verdeyen explains the latter as part of the medieval worldview, adding that Ruusbroec did not reject free will, but does not explain the superior’s objections to the text. If instead, as I assume here, the texts are from less orthodox beguine authors, it does explain his objections. For some views that Ruusbroec did not author this text see Teodoro H. Martín, “Notas,” in Juan Ruusbroec, *Obras* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1984) 10. For another perspective on the text’s authorship see Mikel M. Kors, “Ruusbroec en de crisis van de mystiek,” *Ons geestelijk erf* 75 (2001) 116–24.

<sup>24</sup> Ruusbroec, *Van Den XII*, 63.

probably a male cleric or Cistercian.<sup>25</sup> He included an earlier Latin translation of her *Seven Manieren Minne*, where in the last of the Seven Manners of Love the religious woman interprets Paul's Philippians 1:23. Still, the passage could be an example of what McGinn describes as the beguines' "intense desire" for union, expressed in both abyssal and liquid imagery, a trace of what we will see she inherited from her former beguine community. She expresses this desire as follows:

The soul's great sadness is to have to be so far away and to seem so alien. It cannot forget its exile; its desire cannot be calmed; what the soul longs for wretchedly vexes it and thus afflicts and torments it beyond measure and without respite. . . . With afflicted heart it then says with the apostle: I long to be dissolved and to be with Christ.<sup>26</sup>

Beatrice describes this desire for dissolution in Christ in her text's seventh stage, in which "the soul is united to its bridegroom, and is wholly made one spirit in inseparable faithfulness and eternal love."<sup>27</sup> The hagiographer would have recognized all this as biblical language, but would have been unsure what to do when he read Beatrice's statement that she was "so deeply immersed and absorbed in the abyss of love that it [the soul] is made wholly into love."<sup>28</sup> He decided to add to this distinctive beguine metaphor an orthodox one used by Bernard of Clairvaux, that of the drop of water in wine, yet with a variation crucial for our topic.

In Bernard's *On Loving God*, we find a predecessor to beguine ideas about annihilation and deification, including liquid imagery, and the elements that they will challenge:

It is deifying to go through such an experience. Just as a drop of water, infused in much wine, seems (*videtur*) to disappear completely . . . just as iron, ignited and burning, seems (*videtur*) similar to fire . . . and just as air, pervaded by the light of the sun, is transformed into the same clarity . . . so all human affection in the saints must, in some ineffable way, liquefy by itself and be wholly transfused into the will of God (variant translation: and the will must be wholly transfused into God).<sup>29</sup>

Bernard describes the rare but orthodox understanding of deification using metaphors of two *different* substances, which *seem* to become similar yet really maintain their

<sup>25</sup> Hollywood, *Soul as Virgin Wife*, 29.

<sup>26</sup> Beatrice of Nazareth, "Seven Manners of Holy Love," in *The Life of Beatrice of Nazareth* (ed. Roger de Ganck; Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1991) 325.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 305.

<sup>29</sup> "Atque in Deo penitus transfundi voluntatem." Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* 10.28, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera* (ed. Jean Leclercq et al.; Paris: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–1977) 3:119. For a comprehensive history of these three metaphors see Jean Pépin, "'Stilla aquae modica multo infusa vino, ferrum ignitum, luce perfusus aer'. L'origine de trois comparaisons familiaires à la théologie mystique médiévale," *Divinitas (Miscellanae André Combès)* 11 (1967) 331–75.

separable natures.<sup>30</sup> These metaphors can also be read in terms of what will later become the orthodox “traditional qualifications . . . [insisting, first,] that union does not involve a merging of essences; second, that union removes the consciousness but not the ontological reality of distinction; and third, that the soul becomes God by grace not by nature.”<sup>31</sup> Referring to two different substances ensures that the essences of the human and divine nature are not confused and that the acquisition of divine attributes is understood as something that the solvent “grants” the solute, making it “seem” similar. Just as iron is not igneous by nature, we are not divine by nature but divinized by grace. This divinization does not mean that we become the sun, but that we acquire its clarity. Transfusion is of wills, not of the entire human being. We become aware only of God, just as when blinded by sunlight we can only see light. Everything may seem to disappear, but the sun remains distinct. The hagiographer has to add Bernard’s metaphor of the drop of water immediately after Beatrice’s abyss because her metaphor does not maintain this schema clearly. He writes: “All the affection of her heart took on, in some way, a celestial nature like a little drop of water running down into the vast expanse of the sea and immersed in the ocean of eternity.”<sup>32</sup> His qualifier “in some way” (*quodammodo*) serves the same mitigating role as Bernard’s *videtur*, preserving the distinction of natures. Yet his metaphor of a drop of water in the ocean is the earliest instance I have been able to find of a variant that distinguishes the beguines’ theological speculations from those closer to orthodoxy.<sup>33</sup>

We will see that Porete uses this same metaphor as a way of challenging the distinction between and separability of human and divine natures. Just as a drop of water is of the same nature as the ocean and once dissolved in it cannot be separated again, so is the annihilated soul of divine nature permanently one with God. If her hagiographer is being faithful to a tradition inspired by Beatrice, then we can ask whether Beatrice’s claim that “the heart melts” (*hare herte versmeltendene*) and “the spirit sinks away down into love” (*hare geest altemale in minnen versinkende*)<sup>34</sup> is closer to her Cistercian tradition and Bernard or to her beguine legacy and Porete. Read in light of Bernard there is nothing unorthodox about Beatrice’s text. Indeed, her last stage remains true to Pauline language. But if her Dutch words, and her liquid and abyssal imagery, mean what they do in Hadewijch’s claim that the spirit

<sup>30</sup> Richard of St. Victor is the other important Western example. For an introduction insisting on the orthodoxy of the doctrine see the chapter on deification in McGinn, *Essential Writings*. For the ingenious way in which church fathers would have been able to separate wine from water see Pépin, above.

<sup>31</sup> McGinn, “Love, Knowledge and *Unio Mystica* in the Western Christian Tradition,” in *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith*, 79.

<sup>32</sup> Beatrice, “Seven Manners,” 305.

<sup>33</sup> That is, in Western Christianity. I am not taking into consideration Evagrius’s use of the image, for which there is no evidence of transmission (McGinn, “Ocean and Desert,” 158).

<sup>34</sup> Beatrice, “Seven Manners,” 202. Quote in Hollywood, *Soul as Virgin Wife*, 31.

“sinks with frenzy in [the abyss] of Love’s fruition,”<sup>35</sup> then we move away from Bernard’s doctrine of deification and closer to Porete’s doctrines.

As Hadewijch tells us in one of her visionary accounts, Christ appeared to her once and entered into her with the result that both were annihilated. First, she tells us: “And I saw him become nothing . . . and dissolve” (*Ende ich sahene al te niete wertene . . . ende al smelten*). Later she says: “I melted into him and nothing of myself remained” (*versmalt in heme ende mi mijns selues niet en bleef*).<sup>36</sup> At first, she uses a qualifier: “To me it was as if at that moment we were one without difference” (*Mi was op die vre ochte wi een waren sonder differencie*).<sup>37</sup> Then, the qualifier disappears. In Porete, too, we will find two stages of union. Neither will be satisfied with partial divinization. At the end of her text, Hadewijch reaches the goal she introduced at the beginning, the “highest” goal possible: “to be God with God” (*god met god te sine*). She is exploring new territory, yet no qualifier is used for safety. Nor is a qualifier used when in a letter she describes being “wholly in the Unity of Love. In this state one *is* the Father.”<sup>38</sup> The letter and the vision do not form a coherent theology, but our objective is not to systematize Hadewijch. We are moving instead toward understanding how beguine abyssal and liquid imagery are joined to doctrines of annihilation and deification. These doctrines will not form a systematic beguine theology. Nevertheless, they will be born as conceptual siblings of the beguines’ natural metaphors and share their communitarian foster care.

The metaphor of sinking in the ocean of love helped Hadewijch express her experience of being annihilated and deified in God. Unfortunately, there is not enough evidence to claim that this metaphor expresses a similar experience in Beatrice’s writing. “Being wholly one with love” could have meant something different for her. Should we read her in light of her metaphors of sinking and dissolution or of her fish in water simile?<sup>39</sup> The latter occurs both before and after images of liquefaction. It may serve as an analogy for the closeness yet nonidentity of humanity and divinity. Beatrice’s images certainly do not fit a coherent or progressive pattern. Again, the main goal here is not to analyze her theology but to discern her beguine heritage. It is only when the same language arises not only in Beatrice, Hadewijch, and, as we will see later, Porete, but also among other beguines, that we can propose a shared theological pool of ideas. These ideas would then have been developed in each beguine’s individual theology. It is among these ideas that we will find the seeds that in some fertile contexts grew to become radical doctrines of annihilation and deification.

<sup>35</sup> Hadewijch, *The Complete Works*, 244.

<sup>36</sup> Hadewijch, *Das Buch der Visionen* (Stuttgart: Bad-Cannstatt, 1998) 97 [translation mine].

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>38</sup> Hadewijch, *The Complete Works*, 118.

<sup>39</sup> Beatrice, “Seven Manners,” 317.

A beguine who undergoes a process of annihilation and deification is the main speaker in the treatise known as *Schwester Katrei*.<sup>40</sup> The dialogue between the beguine and her confessor expresses its own peculiar theology, but does so in language very similar to that of our beguines, especially Porete. Lerner identifies the treatise with the heresy of the free spirit because of its inclusion of this annihilative and deifying process. He summarizes it as follows: “[S]he rids herself of all desire and sinks into nothingness. Thereupon she is drawn into a divine light, ‘heaven and earth become too narrow’ for her, and she finally cries out ‘sir, rejoice with me, I have become God.’”<sup>41</sup> What Lerner identifies as “free spirit” influence has been interpreted by McGinn and Elvira Borgstadt as a not-necessarily-heretical appropriation of Meister Eckhart’s teaching.<sup>42</sup> Given that most manuscripts interpolate Eckhartian sermons into an earlier original, and given that recent work shows that beguines influenced Eckhart, we cannot ignore the possibility that the treatise reflects a spirituality originating in pre-Eckhartian beguinages.<sup>43</sup>

In the critical edition of the *Schwester Katrei*, the beguine “*seczet sich in ein blosheit*.”<sup>44</sup> Lerner translates the original Alemannic as “she sinks into nothingness” and Borgstadt as “she places herself into a state of emptiness.”<sup>45</sup> Borgstadt reads the phrase in light of Eckhart, telling us that she is linking *blosheit* to Eckhart’s detachment (*abgescheidenheit*) and emptiness (*luterkeit*).<sup>46</sup> But if we read it in light of beguine imagery and Porete’s nothingness and think of it as carrying the dual meaning of “sinking and/or placing herself in nothingness,” we have much more than an echo of Porete’s “*mectre a nient*.”<sup>47</sup> The latter can be translated as “places her in nothingness,” or “reduces her to nothingness,” or “sinks her into nothingness.”<sup>48</sup> We know this because Porete conflates all of these locative, annihilative, and dissolutive connotations in a passage about the soul, in which God “seats her” and “makes her nothing” (*la fait nulle*) in a space that is both a “resting place” and an “abyss of wretchedness . . . flood of sin.”<sup>49</sup> I prefer Lerner’s Poretian translation because it solves a problem acknowledged in Borgstadt’s edition, that

<sup>40</sup> “Schwester Catherine,” in Franz-Josef Schweitzer, *Der Freiheitsbegriff der deutschen Mystik* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1981).

<sup>41</sup> Lerner, “Liquids,” 403.

<sup>42</sup> “The ‘Sister Catherine’ Treatise,” in *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher* (ed. Bernard McGinn; trans. Elvira Borgstadt; New York: Paulist Press, 1986) 10.

<sup>43</sup> Lerner, “Liquids,” 403. See also the collection *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics* (ed. Bernard McGinn; New York: Continuum, 1994).

<sup>44</sup> Schweitzer, *Freiheitsbegriff*, 337.

<sup>45</sup> Borgstadt, “Sister Catherine,” 358.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>47</sup> Marguerite Porete, *Le Mirouer de simples âmes* (ed. Romana Guarnieri and Paul Verdeyen; Brepols: Turnholt, 1986) 326.

<sup>48</sup> Marguerite Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Ellen L. Babinsky; New York: Paulist Press, 1993) 192; eadem, *The Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Edmund Colledge et al.; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999) 144 [last translation mine].

<sup>49</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Babinsky) 192.

is, how to interpret the text's peculiar doctrine of establishment, one described as a permanent union.<sup>50</sup>

Borgstadt's edition takes an Eckhartian stance, acknowledged as vague, and links establishment with the possibility that Eckhart's conception of union could be permanent. But, as Ellen Babinsky briefly mentions, the other place where this peculiar doctrine of establishment appears is none other than Porete's *Mirror*.<sup>51</sup> Babinsky is referring to Porete's radical claim that mystical union is permanent or, more likely, that Porete uses it to describe the annihilated soul's authority to teach on her being "so well established" in God.<sup>52</sup> McGinn, in his introduction to Borgstadt's translation, also reads establishment as giving authority to Catherine, yet without mentioning Porete. This authority granted to a woman over a man is, in McGinn's words, "one of the most daring aspects of this provocative text."<sup>53</sup> We do not need to claim that one of the authors read the other in order to interpret the doctrine of establishment or the texts' daring aspects. Both authors do claim that their souls have been established in a place reached through a sinking or dissolving process. Still, I suggest merely that they both borrow from the same conceptual pool, establishment being but one of the concepts they both adapted and integrated into their texts.

Porete's ideas about establishment include what we will later identify as one of the original elements of her doctrine of annihilation, an atypical "reversion to a pre-creative state of being."<sup>54</sup> Catherine also says that the soul must flow back to the place she reached by being established and/or annihilated: "I am where I was before I was created, there [blos] God and God is."<sup>55</sup> Since there are important differences between these texts, we should look first for a common heritage rather than direct influence. Catherine's establishment is "*jn der blossen Gottheit da nie bild noch forme warrd*."<sup>56</sup> Here she is closer to Eckhart's neoplatonist idea that the Godhead is beyond images and forms, including Trinitarian ones. We will see Porete differing from Catherine in having her own theology wherein the annihilated soul moves beyond images yet retains the image and form of the Trinity. In this respect Porete is closer to the beguine Mechthild of Magdeburg than to Sister Catherine. We can now discuss how ideas about being planted and being given divine form link Mechthild and Porete to a source from which Catherine is more distant. On the other hand, ideas about establishment link Porete and Catherine directly, if not to each other, to a source from which Mechthild is more distant. All are linked together by liquid imagery and ideas about annihilation and deification. Eckhart

<sup>50</sup> Borgstadt, "Sister Catherine," 12.

<sup>51</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Babinsky) 223.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>53</sup> McGinn, "Introduction," 13.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994)

131. See also Hollywood, *Soul as Virgin Wife*, ch. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Schweitzer, *Freiheitsbegriff*, 337 [translation mine].

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.



may have borrowed these ideas too. They would later have been identified by scholars as neoplatonic, but are in fact closer to Eckhart's time.<sup>57</sup> I do not deny that Porete and Catherine are somewhat indebted to Greek or Latin patristic sources. What I propose is that we ought to consider also the possibility of beguine sources less akin to neoplatonism than to Eckhart's learned spirituality.

We can strengthen this last claim if we study Mechthild of Magdeburg's *Flowing Light of the Divinity*. As mentioned earlier, Hollywood shows that Mechthild differs from her contemporaries when she claims to achieve union without distinction. Mechthild's claims are expressed not in scholastic language but in a cornucopia of liquescent images that merit the entire study that James C. Franklin devoted to them.<sup>58</sup> Whether Catherine's flowing metaphors are indebted to Eckhartian neoplatonism, beguine spirituality, or both is unclear. But there is nothing to indicate that those apophatic elements which Hollywood finds in Mechthild owe much, if anything, to Greek sources. Hollywood introduces some of these elements when she discusses how Mechthild's intense desire for God is so strong that she is willing to be annihilated:

[T]he soul must become nothing in order to achieve union with God. A similar idea is expressed in God's injunction that she should "love the nothing" and "flee the something." The soul's willingness to suffer God's absence for his honor also finds early expression when she claims that she would willingly go to hell to further the praise of God. This conception is most fully expressed, as Haas and Heimbach have shown, in Mechthild's description of sinking humility, which hunts the soul "up into heaven and draws her again into the abyss."<sup>59</sup>

We are here on familiar beguine ground. Mechthild is developing on her own a theology that will later integrate elements originating in the two most famous mystical female communities, the beguines and the monastery at Helfta.<sup>60</sup> What Hans and Heimbach above found is a link to the spirituality of Mechthild's beguine caretakers that she extends and elaborates in the book that will inaugurate a different mysticism at Helfta.<sup>61</sup> Annihilating oneself, sinking into an abyss of nothingness in order to achieve divine union without distinction, is a beguine theme behind the images of flow that permeate Mechthild's book and give it its title. Frank Tobin compares these images to those of Eckhart, assuming that the text's flowing images

<sup>57</sup> See Sells, above.

<sup>58</sup> James C. Franklin, *Mystical Transformations: The Imagery of Liquids in the Work of Mechthild von Magdeburg* (London: Associated University Presses, 1978).

<sup>59</sup> Hollywood, *Soul as Virgin Wife*, 79.

<sup>60</sup> For an introduction to the latter see Mary Jeremy Finnegan, *The Women of Helfta: Scholars and Mystics* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1991).

<sup>61</sup> Saskia Murk-Jansen, *Brides in the Desert* (New York: Orbis, 1998) 65–68. See also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

of light are indebted to a neoplatonism that Mechthild would not have recognized.<sup>62</sup> This may be true, but all the images he discusses seem more at home in the liquid imagery of beguines. This is certainly the case for the image Tobin identifies as the one most frequently used to describe the Trinity. When he cites Mechthild's description of her mystically experiencing the "heavenly flood of the spring of the flowing Trinity," we are closer to abyssal beguine language than to neoplatonic emanation. Ideas from a "liquid theology" are among those that, as Tobin tells us but quickly forgets, Herbert Grundmann claims were present in women's religious communities that then influenced Eckhart.<sup>63</sup> He attributes Eckhart's liquid vocabulary to his drawing on the theologian Abelard with "astonishing poetic intensity" and coming up with terms such as "pouring forth," "spilling over," "overflowing," and so on.<sup>64</sup> His excellent comparison of Mechthild and Eckhart supports his claim that they shared a tradition; but the astonishing imagery moves Eckhart closer, not to patristic theology, but to the beguine heritage of which we find evidence in Mechthild, Hadewijch, and even Beatrice.<sup>65</sup>

### ■ Annihilation and Deification in Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*

We now understand better the legacy from which Porete extracted those elements that would form her theology of annihilation and deification. These inherited elements, together with original ones, appear in the following passage, where she challenges the orthodox account of the soul's relation to God:

[He] has transformed her of Himself for her sake into His goodness. And if she is thus encumbered in all aspects, she loses her name, for she rises in sovereignty. And therefore she loses her name in the One in whom she is melted and dissolved through Himself and in Himself. Thus she will be like a body of water which flows from the sea, which has some name, as one would be able to say Aisne or Seine or another river. And when this water or river returns into the sea, it loses its course and its name.<sup>66</sup>

Here the soul already has followed Bernard and given her will to God, becoming transformed into his goodness. Her desire is still too intense, thus she is still encumbered. Not satisfied with being united only in will by being transformed into a divine aspect, she is still to move higher. Dissolution is to be completed, a mutual melting where nothing remains of the human nature, not even its name. Annihilation leads to total deification. Porete foreshadows here what she later challenges explicitly. No metaphorical drop of wine will serve. By stretching

<sup>62</sup> Frank Tobin, "Mechthild of Magdeburg and Meister Eckhart: Points of Coincidence," in *Beguine Mystics*, 54.

<sup>63</sup> Grundmann, *Movements*; Tobin, "Mechthild of Magdeburg," 47.

<sup>64</sup> Tobin, "Mechthild of Magdeburg," 55.

<sup>65</sup> For Beatrice see especially the seventh of her seven stages.

<sup>66</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Babinsky), 158.

Bernard's metaphor to the point that it breaks down, changing it into one substance divided only in terms of magnitude, she sets the stage for her claim that it is the chasm between humanity and divinity that seems real. While in Bernard human consciousness of distinction is lost, in Porete divine consciousness of indistinction is regained.

We can better understand this last annihilation into deification by focusing on one of the several uniquely Poretian concepts in which it inheres.<sup>67</sup> I choose as an illustration Porete's idea of "conformity" because it is so suggestive. She introduces this concept as follows:

*Love*—It is fitting, says Love, that this soul should be conformable (*semblable*) to the deity, for she is transformed (*muee*) into God through whom she has detained (*detenue*) her true form (*forme*), which is confirmed and given to her without beginning, from one alone who has always loved her from his goodness.

*The Soul*.—Oh, Love, says this Soul, the meaning of what is said makes me nothing.<sup>68</sup>

This passage reveals the paradoxical process whereby the annihilated soul loses her form and acquires a new one while, simultaneously, she recognizes that she never lost her true form and is only regaining what she always had. We can best unpack this abstruse claim if we view it as the converging point of speculations already seminally present in both Mechthild and Hadewijch.

The former I briefly mentioned in the beguine context of the *Schwester Catherine*. Mechthild reveals that God has taken the soul and

has given her his form (*hat si gebildet nach im selber*), and has planted her in himself (*er ha si gepflanzt in im selber*), and has [then] unified himself with her, the most lowly of all creatures (*er hat sich allermeist mit ir vereinet under allen creaturen*), flooding her so much with his divine nature that she cannot speak anymore (*siner gotlichen nature so vil gegossen, das si anders mit gesprechen mag*).<sup>69</sup>

Mechthild's soul being flooded by the divine nature reiterates metaphorically what Christ said to her earlier: "You are so strongly en-natured in me, that nothing can come between you and me."<sup>70</sup> Her understanding of the divine nature of the soul is so radical that she has to defend it from attack: "I said in one passage of this book that the Godhead is my Father by nature. You do not understand this, and say, 'Everything that God has done with us is completely a matter of grace and not of

<sup>67</sup> Elsewhere I intend to address in depth other uniquely Poretian concepts such as "grace," which translators assume is the same as the scholastic concept. I briefly discuss grace here and, in more detail, the feudal context in which Poretian "grace" subverts scholastic *gratia* by becoming courteous "gracefulness."

<sup>68</sup> Verdeyen, *Ruusbroec and his Mysticism*, 150 [translation mine].

<sup>69</sup> Mechthild von Magdeburg, *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit* (ed. Hans Neumann; Munich: Artemis, 1990) 239.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

nature. 'You are right, but I am right too.'<sup>71</sup> McGinn sees in this conformity, and in Mechthild's doctrine of the "preexistence of all things in the divine enclosure before creation" the extreme language of nature that later in "Marguerite Porete, even more than [in] Hadewijch and Mechthild, shows that the germs of the new mysticism of *unitas indistinctionis* were present, especially among female mystics, prior to Meister Eckhart."<sup>72</sup> According to McGinn, Eckhart will reach a peak of radicalism which all his successors will mitigate without abandoning his radical language. Tauler comes close to the beguines' language of union, but "he sought to qualify the more daring ways in which the Meister had expressed the union of indistinction."<sup>73</sup> Suso wrote about annihilation, continues McGinn "but must be interpreted in the light of the three traditional qualifications Suso always insisted upon."<sup>74</sup> Ruusbroec wrote about union without distinction but "insists on the infinite distinction that must always accompany and succeed the experience of union."<sup>75</sup> This new mysticism, made famous by these northern European theologians, can be found in seminal form in the complex composed of gestating beguine ideas such as conformity, enclosure, and the preexistence of the soul in God.

Mechthild appropriates the pool of ideas from which Porete will drink later in a distinct manner. Mechthild is the only thinker to radicalize Bernard's metaphor of fire while following him in insisting on the preservation of the two substances. In this passage we find her saying that she cannot go against her nature just as "gold cannot be destroyed in fire," while insisting that "God is her Father by nature." This is an insight revealed to Mechthild, not a union that is to be attained. For her, *unitas indistinctionis* does not involve losing consciousness of distinction but becoming conscious of indistinction. In this indistinction, Mechthild seems to equate implicitly the divine form given in an original state and the divine nature of the soul. Porete will explicitly equate the two.

Recasting Aristotelian ideas, our beguines' theologies revolve around a thematic kernel in which God's form is nothingness, and his form is inseparable from his nature or essence. Since it is uncreated, divine nature will not need to acquire a form. Its form is that of formlessness. Conformity in human beings will involve being given God's formless form; annihilative conformity will involve either being given or recognizing our divine form, that of formless nothingness. Since God's nature is also nothingness, it is not only in form but in nature that we are divine. We already saw in Mechthild that conformity occurs in the pre-created state; for her, annihilation involves awareness of this fact. Although she borrows from the same ideas we first found in Hadewijch, the latter emphasis in her understanding of conformity is even more radical.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>72</sup> McGinn, *Union*, 78.

<sup>73</sup> McGinn, *Harvest*, 296.

<sup>74</sup> McGinn, *Union*, 79.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

Mechthild drinks from the same source as Hadewijch, but in the latter the emphasis is not on consciousness of indistinction regained. For Hadewijch, the goal is annihilation as attainment of the form and nature of nothingness. We saw her surpassing Mechthild's daring in her extreme claim not only of being daughter of the Father by nature but of identity with him. She comes closer to Mechthild in her use of the fire metaphor to propose the conforming of natures, even when not using Mechthild's traditional language of two substances:

O sublime nature, true Love,  
 When will you make my nature so fair  
 That it will be wholly conformed to your nature?  
 For I wish to be wholly conformed  
 If all that is other in me were yours  
 Everything that is yours would be altogether mine  
 I should burn to ashes in your fire!<sup>76</sup>

Is Hadewijch implying here that something remains in the ashes, like Mechthild, or that everything is annihilated, like Porete? I suggested that Hadewijch wants to become nothing because God is nothing. While we can only speculate as to what might be behind Mechthild or Hadewijch, their language of conformity points toward an appropriation by Porete, in whose work the theologies of both beguines will converge.

Our beguines converge in Porete not through their specific texts, but in the oral theology we can recapture through them, the theology beguines preached "in conventicles, in workhouses, in the streets." Part of my claim relies on showing that Porete's doctrines, exemplified here by the idea of conformity that leads to annihilation and deification, are expressed in a series of inextricable metaphors, connected not only by their shared concepts but also by their form. Content consists not only of what is said, its nature or essence, but how it is said, in a spoken form scarcely captured in script. I want to recapture the *Mirror's* aural structure by proposing its origin in an oral beguine theology, one unfortunately lost in translation.

We can begin exploring this aural structure with the semantic aspects of the paragraph preceding the doctrine of conformity above. These semantics will help us unveil the original aural quality of the text. In it we find Love declaiming:

The Soul is engraved (*emprainte*) in God, and has her true imprint (*emprainture*) maintained (*detenue*) through the union of Love. And in the manner that wax takes (*prent*) the form (*forme*) of a seal, so has this soul taken (*prinse*) the imprint (*emprainte*) of this true exemplar."<sup>77</sup>

A problem arises when the English translators inconsistently use "held," "retained," "preserved," or "maintained" for both *detenue* and *retenue*. Although Porete is not

<sup>76</sup> Hadewijch, *The Complete Works*, 252.

<sup>77</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Babinsky) 128.

consistent either, she does use *detenue* as the key that opens the listener's mind to a complex of puns and metaphors we can capture if we translate *detenue* as "detained."

Edmund Colledge's edition of the *Mirror* translates *detenue* as "preserved," claiming that it appears in the French critical edition but not in the Latin one. Yet the Latin critical edition does, in fact, cite manuscripts in which *in tenore* appears. The fact that some manuscripts omit it may indicate that the medieval scribes had a translation problem as well. The version that translates *detenue* as *in tenore* offers the best solution by preserving Porete's metaphorical structure. Of the multiple meanings Porete invokes, this scribe chose one that evokes Porete's courtly imagery. This Latin translation presents *detenue*, correctly, as a French verbal form of the noun *tenore*, which it keeps in its original French. The Latin gives the French word *tenore* an ablative ending rather than translating *detenue* as an ablative of Latin *tenura*. The scribe read Porete as saying that she holds her true form as *tenura*, which unlocks the complex system of puns and metaphors of which only an audience of Porete's original oral discourse would have been aware.

Ellen Babinsky's edition misses much of Porete's system, especially in those passages that the edition acknowledges as problematic. Babinsky judges these passages as of "little weight," because they seem to claim there is no real *unitas indistinctionis* of the soul and God, Porete apparently "maintaining that they remain two separate natures even while possessing one will."<sup>78</sup> An example is found when Porete presents her doctrine of conformity leading into deification in a dialogue between Reason and Love:

*Reason*—To whom does she [the soul] belong then?

*Love*—To my will, which transformed (*muee*) her into me.

*Reason*—But who are you, Love? Are you not one of the virtues with us? How is it that you are above us?

*Love*—I am God, for Love is God and God is Love, and this soul is God by the condition of Love. I am God by divine nature and this soul is God by *droicture d'amour*.<sup>79</sup>

We will see this problem dissolve when we re-translate several passages under the hypothesis that Porete's *detenue* has "held in tenure" among the many meanings it attributes to being "detained." Already a hint is given above, in the passage on the wax and seal, where *detenue* is given this meaning through the synonym that immediately follows: *hérیتیère*. Babinsky correctly translates *droicture* as righteousness, an orthodox use found in William of St. Thierry.<sup>80</sup> However, I prefer Colledge's translation, "right of law," because it preserves the structural complex of *detenue*, even though Colledge interprets it incorrectly, claiming that for Porete

<sup>78</sup> Hollywood, *Soul as Virgin Wife*, 109.

<sup>79</sup> Verdeyen, *Ruusbroec and his Mysticism*, 82.

<sup>80</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Babinsky) 104, 224.

divine nature is received as a gift of grace.<sup>81</sup> Already in Mechthild's defense of her divine nature we find a clue that can make sense of Porete's apparent confusion.

Porete does not receive divine nature as a gift of grace. She attains consciousness of indistinction when she learns that she holds divine nature *in tenore*, the way a feudal lady holds her land, by *droicture*, as a *birthright*. As she tells us at the beginning of the text, her first love is for the faraway king, whom she loves as the king's daughter. In the *Mirror*, Love praises the soul: "O very high born one, says love to this precious Pearl, it is well that you have [taken the path of Love and] entered the only noble manor."<sup>82</sup> When Love praises the soul who enters the manor she is not praising the fairytale peasant who marries the prince and becomes queen. Porete's recurrent use of bridal imagery can obscure the soul's status. When Porete enters the manor she is reclaiming her inheritance held *in tenore*. Medieval *tenura* consisted of property being held in absentia while the lord was at war. Italian vulgarizations of the *Mirror*, all based on the Latin, are aware of the connotation of what in modern Italian is having rights or duties *a tenore*, by law.<sup>83</sup> We can understand this in terms of modern English "tenance." A tenant holds a property *in tenore* for a period of time, after which it returns to its rightful owner. It can be said that both parties hold the property, for the landlord owns it and it is leased to the tenant. Porete holds the nature as its landlady. God, as king, holds it as a tenant and returns it, but not as a gift of grace.

If a king should give one of his servants, who loyally served him, a great gift, by which gift the servant would be eternally rich, without ever doing any service again, why would a wise man be astounded by this? . . . [A] wise man is never astounded when another does what is fitting for him to do.<sup>84</sup>

It is not that a wise man is not astounded, as Babinsky suggests, because "a truly courtly and gentle heart recognizes the largesse of a gift given."<sup>85</sup> No matter how generous a king is known to be, a servant who not only is released from expected servitude but also becomes eternally rich will certainly be astounded at such an unexpected gift. What "is fitting" is better understood by the Latin translator who renders *l'appartient* as *ad se spectat seu pertinet*.<sup>86</sup> The king is only doing what is expected of him, what pertains to his duty as a tenant returning something held in trust. Love is divine by nature, and so is Porete, through *droicture d'amour*, the bloodline that the king now reveals to be engraved in Love's charter.

We are now better able to understand why "it is fitting that the soul be conformable" in our opening passage and why her true form has been "granted and

<sup>81</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Colledge) 41.

<sup>82</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Babinsky) 129.

<sup>83</sup> Marguerite Porete, *Lo specchio delle anime semplici* (Classici del pensiero cristiano; Cinisello Balsamo, Milan: San Paolo, 1994).

<sup>84</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Babinsky) 161.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>86</sup> Verdeyen, *Ruusbroec and his Mysticism*, 244.

given to her without beginning.<sup>87</sup> If it has been granted to her without beginning, it is because it has always been hers; she never lost it. She does regain her true form in the sense for which Porete generally uses *semblance* rather than *forme*. She has to lose her *semblable*, as the iron or the river, in the sense of name or consciousness of distinction. In this way she will be conformable (*semblable*) and able to regain her true name or consciousness of indistinction. “Now this soul has her right name from the nothingness in which she rests” (*son droit non du nient en que elle demoure*).<sup>88</sup>

In this context, we can see how Porete puns on the word *detenue*. Not only does she now have her name, but she is imprisoned and “held (*detenu*) in the country of peace.”<sup>89</sup> She is “detained” in a peaceful land because the king has “detained”—held in tenure—her name. Before, she was “detained” in the sense of being enclosed, as we saw preserved in the pool of ideas from which Mechthild appropriated the concept of enclosure. What was for Mechthild “enclosed” is present, but in an ironical sense. Porete says:

I used to be enclosed  
In the servitude of captivity  
When desire imprisoned me  
In the will of affection.<sup>90</sup>

She used to be imprisoned like souls who serve the virtues are still imprisoned, captive of the desire for a virtuous life she once mistakenly assumed to be the equivalent of desire for God. Now she is imprisoned and/or dwells in a peaceful land (*en paiz suis demouree*), freer than “those still imprisoned (*demouree*) by virtue.”<sup>91</sup> She urges the reader to annihilate the virtues along with everything else since they are an encumbrance that takes away peace of mind. If we could state with certainty that Porete knew of Mechthild, specifically her concern about sin, we could read her here as subverting Mechthild’s claim that one should ignite God’s fire and “fuel it with the wood of virtues.”<sup>92</sup> In a few places in Mechthild’s text, saints burn happily and shine fueled by their virtuous life.<sup>93</sup> Porete will happily annihilate in fire the wood or iron of virtue, but as a way of getting rid of them forever.

It is not only the sense of the terms used but also their sound that indicates that a complex of metaphors is being activated. We will return to the alliteration of the phoneme /pr/, which occurs in all the passages cited and connects, among other terms, the soul *emprisonnee* to the *emprainture* of the doctrine of conformity above. This aural mechanism is barely discernible in the written prose, which conceals an

<sup>87</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Babinsky) 125.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>91</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Colledge) 41.

<sup>92</sup> Mechthild, *Fliessende Licht*, 234.

<sup>93</sup> E.g., *ibid.*, 236.



original poetical or semi-poetical counterpart combining alliteration with rhyme. In one example of rhyme in prose we find, if we rewrite it as verse: “*les Vertuz / ont bien ceigneu et aparceu / oians tous ceulx / qui l’ont voulu.*”<sup>94</sup> We can also rewrite as verse another passage combining rhyme and alliteration:

*Et porce peaut l’en bien dire  
Que cil est petit o pouvre  
qui souvent demande  
voire encore qui rien demande.  
Car tout estre quel qu’il soit  
N’est que ung jeu de pelote et jeu d’enfant  
envers le souverain  
estre de nient voulouir  
ouquel estre les francs  
demourent sans remouvoir  
car celui qui est franc  
en son droit estre  
ne pourroit ne refuser  
ne vouloir, ne rien promectre.*<sup>95</sup>

The linguistic acrobatics of passages such as this would have kept the audience enraptured. Alliteration of sounds such as /p/ and /r/ here and /pr/ in the passage on the imprint of the soul help recall what was said in an earlier passage. In this way the audience is led to understand the multivocality of a later use of the sound, such as when it reappears in a context centered on the character of Mary Magdalene. The audience learns more about what receiving the imprint of the seal means when they listen to the story of Magdalene in the desert, where “Love overtook her, which annihilated her (*Amour l’imprint qui l’adnientint*).”<sup>96</sup> The English translation obscures the original context, where the true form, that of nothingness, is conveyed by “overtaking,” “imprinting,” “embracing,” “enclosing,” “detaining” — all of these meanings at the same time. The teaching is then imprinted in the audience’s mind by a final alliterative mnemonic: Love works in the soul “in her, through her, without her (*en elle par elle sans elle*).”<sup>97</sup>

The alliteration is extended when the soul is praised as well taught (*aprinse*), recalling the alliteration in the passage from which our first example of rhyme was extracted. There annihilation is required of those who want to understand and learn/teach (*entendre et aprendre*), something those still enslaved to Virtue cannot do.<sup>98</sup> Virtues lack what is needed, so the soul asks: “[H]ow will they teach their pupils (*comment aprendront les Vertuz a leur subgez*)?” The pun here is that the virtues will forever imprison (*aprendront*) those under their control (*subgez*) unless they

<sup>94</sup> Porete, *Mirouer de Simples Ames* (ed. Guarnieri and Verdeyen) 162.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>96</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Babinsky) 168.

<sup>97</sup> Porete, *Mirouer de simples âmes* (ed. Guarnieri and Verdeyen) 260.

<sup>98</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Babinsky) 132.

are freed by Porete's message. This freedom will be described later when the soul exclaims how she is *emprinse* in God, in contrast to how she used to be *enclosed* under the control of the Virtues.<sup>99</sup> There the soul was embraced (*emprinse*), held (*detenue*) by Love in a freeing way that delivered her from being imprisoned (*enclose*), held (*detenue*). Here the way to be freed is through *entendre et aprendre*, understanding (*entendre*) Porete's teaching and, through learning (*aprendre*), seizing (*aprendre*) what has always been held (*detenue*) in possession. This understanding allows us to conclude, with Bernard, by observing that the annihilated soul does not lose consciousness of distinction but rather attains consciousness of indistinction.

The transition or imprint received in annihilation involves this consciousness of indistinction that in the following passage is to be acquired by the understanding of the intellect (*entendement*):

[W]hat He possesses is more mine than what I possess or ever will possess. . . . I love better by far, one hundred thousand times to one, the abundant goodness which remains in Him than I do the gifts from Him which I have and will have in possession. Thus I love better what is in Him beyond my intellect than I do what is in Him and in my intellect. For this reason what He understands and what I do not understand is more mine than what I understand about Him and which is mine.<sup>100</sup>

Since the soul is divine by nature, we cannot claim that the annihilated soul receives anything by grace. Except, that is, the one thing she lacks, which is beyond her intellect. This last element is the consciousness of indistinction that she acquires now but will fully understand only in heaven. This knowledge is about something that is hers, not something that belongs to God. This is why the *meaning* of what is said, the awareness of what it implies, annihilates her and gives her the form (*semblable*) of nothingness. It transforms her into the Deity and makes her share his form (*semblable*) or understanding. *What* is revealed is that she has always retained her true divine form (*forme*). She must seize what she has always possessed, "detained" *in tenore* as owner, through the one who, "loving her," held it for her. He "detained" it *in tenore* as tenant until the lady reclaimed what had always been under her dominion. This is why this possession is more valuable than anything else she has or will have. Annihilation is thus a process originating at that moment when a gift of consciousness is granted. The imprint of nothingness occurs in time, yet it also occurs in a pre-created state without beginning; she always possessed its form. The deification involved in annihilation shares annihilation's temporality when both are seen as dynamic processes. Yet deification simultaneously escapes temporality when the soul discovers that it is an atemporal process, one that has never begun and shall never end.

<sup>99</sup> Porete, *Mirouer de simples âmes* (ed. Guarnieri and Verdeyen) 344.

<sup>100</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls* (trans. Babinksy) 113.

## ■ Conclusion

Until recently, historical research about free spirits and beguines has been confined to the late medieval period.<sup>101</sup> Lerner tells us that he did not find any evidence that would have led him to go much further than the fourteenth century, since, he claims, “by the end of the fifteenth century the doctrines of the Free Spirit were known only to encyclopedists and antiquarians.”<sup>102</sup> But if we follow Lerner in considering the free spirit movement, not as a distinctive sect, but as the “‘free-spirit style’ of affective mysticism particularly congenial to thirteenth century religious women” we have been studying, then their history has a sequel. Recent work has uncovered evidence suggesting that their radical language of annihilation and deification spread in early modern Europe through an anonymous circulation of the *Mirror*.<sup>103</sup> In the future we may be able to explain the doctrinal similarities between Porete and the seventeenth-century theological controversies that led to the modern “crisis of mysticism.”<sup>104</sup> Thus our exploration of beguine theology helps us begin to approach an unresolved dilemma: How, and why, did the medieval language of annihilation and deification haunt Europe even during the throes that gave birth to modernity?

<sup>101</sup> Romana Guarnieri, “Beghinismo d’oltralpe e Bizzochismo italiano tra il secolo XIV e il secolo XV,” *Analecta tertii ordinis regularis sancti Francisci* 17 (1984) 1. See also eadem, *Donna e chiesa tra mistica e istituzioni* (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 2004).

<sup>102</sup> Lerner, *Heresy*, 242.

<sup>103</sup> Emery, “Margaret Porette,” xxiii; Guarnieri, *Donna e Chiesa*; Paolo Simoncelli suggests that a Catalan version of the *Mirror* may have once existed. He does so in his study of the circulation in the Catalan region of a few extracts from Porete via Bartolomeo Cordoni’s *Dialogue of the Union of God with the Soul*. Paolo Simoncelli, “Il ‘Dialogo dell’unione spirituale di Dio con l’anima’ tra alumbradismo spagnolo e prequietismo italiano,” *Anuario de l’Istituto storico italiano per l’età moderna e contemporanea* 29–30 (1977–1998) 565–601; Elena Botinas i Montero et al., *Les Beguines* (Barcelona: Abadia de Montserrat, 2003); *La perle evangelique* (ed. Daniel Vidal; Grenoble, France: Jerome Millon, 1997)

<sup>104</sup> Hollywood, *Soul as Virgin Wife*, 263; McGinn, *Flowering*, ix.

## The Early Society of Jesus and the Transmission of Beguine and Franciscan Theology in the Early Modern Hispanic World

### 2.1 Introduction

After the publication of the previous article, Lerner published his essay, “New Light on the Mirror of the Simple Souls,” and presented some of its findings at the *Colloque International Marguerite Porete 2010*.<sup>1</sup> The colloquium gathered to discuss the rapidly increasing scholarly work on Porete; especially recent studies composed in light of Genevieve Hasenhor’s exciting discovery, two French fragments of the *Mirror* she described in her essay “La Tradition du Mirror des Simples Ames au XV Siècle: De Marguerite Porete (†1310) a Marguerite de Navarre (†1549).”<sup>2</sup> Lerner showed how Hasenhor’s discovery challenges several assumptions, supports several hypotheses, and raises several questions concerning the transmission of medieval mystical literature. He also wondered why no one ever thought of searching archives at the place where church leaders burned Marguerite’s book. I would have answered that unlike monastic libraries an 18<sup>th</sup> library would not attract much attention from medievalists unless it housed interesting medieval archives. Now, if someone had noticed that the Valenciennes’ local government built the municipal library over a late 16th century school library, one built by what I will call “late-medieval” Jesuits as part of their Counter-reformation activities, Hasenhor’s discovery becomes even more exciting.<sup>3</sup>

We can now answer some of Lerner’s questions together with those raised above by the editors of *Late Medieval Mysticism of the Low Countries* concerning the role of Jesuits in

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<sup>1</sup> Previous chapter published as Juan Marín, “Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete’s *Mirror of Simple Souls*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 01 (2010): 89–109. <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=7009404>. Lerner’s lecture published as Robert E. Lerner, “New Light on The Mirror of Simple Souls,” *Speculum* 85, no. 01 (2010): 91–116.

<sup>2</sup> Hasenhor, “La Tradition Du Miroir Des Simples Âmes Au XVe Siècle.”

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.nordmag.fr/nord\\_pas\\_de\\_calais/valenciennes/valenciennes.htm](http://www.nordmag.fr/nord_pas_de_calais/valenciennes/valenciennes.htm)

relation to other Counter-Reformation orders in the nurturing of the early modern renaissance of Rhenish mysticism. In this postscript to my “Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete’s *Mirror of Simple Souls*,” I discuss the role of religious orders in the transmission of *Late Medieval Mysticism* by focusing on the transmission of beguine spirituality as exemplified in my tracing the *Mirror’s* tradition in a Hispanic context permeated by Franciscan spirituality. I re-trace Hasenhor’s path from Marguerite Porete to Marguerite Navarre, a close friend and financial supporter of the first Jesuit mystics who knew not only the *Mirror* but even its author’s name.

From beguine Marguerite to queen Marguerite, all of the persons, places and mentioned will turn out to have a unique connection with the titles in the edict’s list and with the Jesuit mystics introduced by name here and discussed in depth in the next chapters. Discussing the Hispanic (late medieval Catalan and early modern Spanish) tradition of the *Mirror*, throughout the linguistic and cultural region fought over by French, Catalan, and Spanish crowns until the sixteenth century, will open new avenues for research and illuminate the sources and context that served as tinder for the igniting of Hispanic Jesuit mysticism. I thus prepare the path that will allow me to devote the next chapters to Ignatius of Loyola (†1556), page and soldier serving the court of Navarre, and the first Jesuit mystics, all of whom will be briefly introduced here as protégées of Marguerite de Navarre and Francis Borgia (†1573), both of whom have a unique relationship with the *Mirror*. This chapter will therefore allow us to understand later why radical doctrines of annihilation and deification appear among Jesuits in Catalonia and Navarre, those who had strong links with women and unorthodox Franciscans.<sup>4</sup> It will also provide us further pieces that will help us

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<sup>4</sup> For late 16th century Joachimite Jesuits, see “Joachim and the Catholic Visionaries” Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore & the Prophetic Future: A Medieval Study in Historical Thinking*, New, rev. ed. (Stroud: Sutton Pub, 1999), 116-124. Throughout this dissertation we will encounter the problem of how to approach the blurry

solve the puzzling unresolved dilemma with which we concluded the previous chapter. *How, and why, did the medieval language of annihilation and deification haunt Europe even during the throes that gave birth to modernity?*

## 2.2 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries

Lerner concludes from Hasenhor's work that around 1310 a mysterious copyist transcribed the *Mirror* in Paris, with modification to make it slightly more orthodox. He thus adds yet another sympathizer to those mentioned in the *Mirror*, where we read how Porete made sure her book would survive her death. She had it approved by a Paris theologian, a Cistercian monk, and a Friar Minor. The Franciscan asked that the book "be well guarded and that few see it."<sup>5</sup> Lerner's anonymous transcriber would then pass along that French copy clandestinely. "Whoever the rescuer might have been, she or he would have been pleased to know that the rescue effort led to the genesis of the Chantilly manuscript."<sup>6</sup> Lerner also follows the standard assumption that Porete came from nobility, thus explaining her resources for printing her book and having it circulated. More carefully, Colledge simply notes there must have been funds available for the employment of scribes.<sup>7</sup> Adding the Hispanic, Catalan element gives us a different picture.

As candidate for Lerner's rescuer I postulate Catalan Franciscan *spirituali* Arnau Vilanova and/or one of his disciples, probably Raymond Lull. Through my 2011 email correspondence with Lerner's former doctoral student, Sean Field, I learned that the three of us came upon the Porete-Vilanova connection around the same time. The connection

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"line between orthodox and heretical." Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links Between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 241.

<sup>5</sup> Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 221.

<sup>6</sup> Lerner, *New Light*, 315.

<sup>7</sup> Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, *Notre Dame Texts in Medieval Culture* vol. 6 (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), xl.

emerges through Vilanova's letter *Epistola a gerentes zonam pelliceam*.<sup>8</sup> Catalan scholar Josep Perarnau recently identified its addressee as Marguerite Porete's fautor, Guiard de Cressonessart.<sup>9</sup> Field just published his translation as an epilogue to his study *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor: The Trials of Marguerite Porete and Guiard of Cressonessart*. He describes the *Epistola* as "an exciting demonstration of how reports of Guiard's group were circulating in the South of France."<sup>10</sup> While Field's does not accept my following interpretation on Vilanova's role, he welcomed my suggestions for a role of Lull and Cordoni. I take the following as a footnote to Field's study, one of best works so far on Porete and one of the few that does some justice to the connection between the beguines and the *spirituali* followers of Peter Olivi, Franciscan beguines.<sup>11</sup>

The letter was copied in Vilanova's scriptorium; its library containing Joachimite texts often consulted by Peter Olivi, who met Arnau while both were students at Montpellier, at that time part of Aragon.<sup>12</sup> Later he became famous after he served as medic for the Catalan Borgias.<sup>13</sup> Also revolving around the latter Borgia we find the Franciscan *spirituali* tradition that followed Joachim of Fiore, a tradition popularized in the region through the influence of

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<sup>8</sup> O. Cartaregia and J. Perarnau, "El text sencer de l'Epistola ad gerentes zonam pelliceam d'Arnau de Vilanova," *Arxiu de textos catalans antics*, no. 12 (1993): 7–42

<sup>9</sup> For earlier work on Cressonessart P. Verdeyen, "Le Procès D'inquisition Contre Marguerite Porete Et Guiard De Cressonessart (1309-1310)," *Revue D'histoire Ecclesiastique* 81, no. 1–2 (1986): 47–94; R. E. Lerner, "An Angel of Philadelphia in the Reign of Philip the Fair: The Case of Guiard of Cressonessart," *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Joseph R. Strayer* (1976): 343–364.

<sup>10</sup> Sean L. Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor: The Trials of Marguerite Porete and Guiard of Cressonessart* (Univ of Notre Dame Pr, 2012), 177.

<sup>11</sup> Another important connection meriting further research is that of Marguerite Porete, alias Marie de Valenciennes and Jewish converts. Porete was burnt in 1310 besides a Jew. Céline Balasse unearthed Parisian Jewish property records mentioning a Margarete de Valence, records connected to Porete's inquisitor Guillaume de Nogaret, but no connection has been made. Céline Balasse and Fondation pour la mémoire de la Shoah, *1306, L'expulsion Des Juifs Du Royaume De France* (De Boeck Université, 2008), 159, 162, 335.

<sup>12</sup> Webster and Pontifical, *Els Menorets*, 244; Ziegler's in Perarnau ed. (1995), 252; *Libri, Biblioteche E Letture Dei Frati Mendicanti (secoli XIII-XIV): Atti Del XXXII Convegno Internazionale, Assisi, 7-9 Ottobre 2004, Atti Dei Convegni Della Società Internazionale Di Studi Francescani e Del Centro Interuniversitario Di Studi Francescani nuova ser*, 15 (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo, 2005), 74.

<sup>13</sup> Francesco Santi, *Arnau De Vilanova: L'obra Espiritual*, *Història i Societat* 5 (València: Diputació Provincial de València, 1987), 146.

their medic.<sup>14</sup> Around 1309, Vilanova, returned to Paris after his earlier condemnation by the magistrates.<sup>15</sup> A year earlier he had met Lull who accompanied Vilanova throughout his ordeal in the spring 1309, Vilanova's imprisonment at the same time and place of Porete's own imprisonment. Vilanova left before Porete's execution, leaving Lull behind at the Place de Greve's, but he had earlier written a letter to Porete's circle, trying to convince Cressonessart and his companions not to get in trouble with the Inquisition.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps he had a role in Cressonessart's recantation, though regardless whether Marguerite read Vilanova's letter, we know he would not have convinced her. But more importantly, the letter, written while Vilanova stayed with the Borgias, possessed until the late 16<sup>th</sup> century by the Borgias who became Dukes of Gandía, at least until the time in which the fourth duke, Francis, entered the Society of Jesus and transformed Gandía into the cradle of Jesuit mysticism. In the interim, the notorious Borgia family successfully established itself as one of the most prominent families in Italy, beginning with Alfonso de Borgia, a jurist and diplomat

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<sup>14</sup> See his 1306 *Introductio in librum [Ioachim]: De semine scripturarum. Allocutio super significatione nominis tetragrammaton* in *Arnaldi De Vilanova Opera Theologica Omnia (AVOThO)* (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> C. Regnier, "Arnau de Villeneuve and Ramon Lull Emblematic figures of the Catalan golden age" *Medicographia*, Vol 28, No. 4, 2006. See also Santi, *Arnau De Vilanova*; Albert Hauf, *D'Eiximenis a Sor Isabel De Villena: Aportació a L'estudi De La Nostra Cultura Medieval*, 1st ed, Biblioteca Sanchis Guarner 19 (Barcelona: Institut de Filologia Valenciana, 1990); Jaume Mensa i Valls, *Arnau De Vilanova, Espiritual: Guia Bibliogràfica*, 1st ed, Treballs de la Secció de Filosofia i Ciències Socials 17 (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1994); Internacional d'Estudis sobre Arnau de Vilanova Trobada, *Actes De La I Trobada Internacional d'Estudis Sobre Arnau De Vilanova*, Treballs de la Secció de Filosofia i Ciències Socials 18-19 (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1995); Pere Santonja, *La Influència De La Cultura Judía En La Obra De Arnau De Vilanova [1238?-1311]: La Espiritualidad De Su Tiempo* (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 2001); Josep Perarnau, *L'Alia Informatio Beguinorum d'Arnau De Vilanova* (Barcelona: Facultat de Teologia de Barcelona, Secció de Sant Pacià, 1978); Società, Centro, and Fondazione, *Libri, Biblioteche E Letture Dei Frati Mendicanti (secoli XIII-XIV)*.

<sup>16</sup> O. Cartaregia and J. Perarnau, "El text sencer de l'Epistola ad gerentes zonam pelliceam d'Arnau de Vilanova," *Arxiu de textos catalans antics*, no. 12 (1993): 7–42; Trobada, *Actes De La I Trobada Internacional d'Estudis Sobre Arnau De Vilanova*; Perarnau, *L'Alia Informatio Beguinorum d'Arnau De Vilanova*; Santi, *Arnau De Vilanova*; Santonja, *La Influència De La Cultura Judía En La Obra De Arnau De Vilanova [1238?]*; P. Espelt and others, "Noves dades biogràfiques de mestre Arnau de Vilanova," *Arxiu de textos catalans antics*, no. 7 (1989): 276.



for the Court of Aragon.<sup>17</sup> All this leads me to propose the hypothesis that in this region covering Catalonian Aragon, Southern France and northern Italy, Spiritual Franciscans Vilanova and Lull set a precedent for later Carthusians and Jesuits, one initiating a tradition of rescuing persecuted books, one testified in the *Mirror* itself.

Few at the time would have surpassed the funding of such “rescue” enterprises than Vilanova, who was supported by kings, cardinals and popes, including Cardinals of the influential Colonna and Orsini families.<sup>18</sup> They all valued his medical talents and helped him built his own scribal school for the translation of spiritual texts in the vernacular. Yet in 1317, the Council of Tarragona in Catalonia prohibited gatherings on conventicles or the possession of books in the vernacular to all of his disciples, whether they were beguinos, beguinas or de regula tertia Sancti Francisci.<sup>19</sup> Presumably, some of them would have been translations that Vilanova made after several contacts with the Carthusians monasteries that preserved the *Mirror*, and spread it as far as England.<sup>20</sup> Among these we find Angela of Foligno’ *Memorial*.<sup>21</sup>

Donatella Nebbiai-Della Guarda argues that around the time of Angela of Foligno’s death, Vilanova brought the manuscript of her *Memoriale*, at first kept only in *biblioteca secreta*, to Southern France and Spanish Catalonia, from which copies spread alongside other collections of mystical texts, including several found in our edict, not only Lull, but also

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<sup>17</sup> The daughter of Alfonso de Aragón, first duke of Gandía, along with other Franciscan tertiaries from France founded the Catalonian convent where later Borgia’s aunt became the abbess. The convent’s discipline included the Spiritual’s radical poverty and excluded all of the later papal attenuations.

<sup>18</sup> José Ma Pou y Martí, *Visionarios, Beguinos Y Fraticelos Catalanes (siglos XIII-XV)* (Madrid: Ed. Colegio “Cardenal Cisneros,” 1991), 85.

<sup>19</sup> *Trobada, Actes De La I Trobada Internacional d’Estudis Sobre Arnau De Vilanova*, v.2, 231.

<sup>20</sup> Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion*; L. M. Smyth, *Preaching with Their Hands: The Role of the Carthusians in the Transmission of Women’s Texts in Late Medieval England* (Stanford University, 2001); *Prophets Abroad*; N. Watson, “Melting into God the English Way: Deification in the Middle English Version of Marguerite Porete’s *Mirouer Des Simples Âmes Anienties*,” *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late Medieval England* (1996): 19–50.

<sup>21</sup> Pou, 83.

other women “saints” such as St. Bridget, St. Mechthild, and St. Gertrude.<sup>22</sup> Could he be the mysterious Brother Arnald that one manuscript tradition conflates with Angela’s confessor? We know the latter only as Brother A.<sup>23</sup> Speculations aside, Donatella Nebbiai-Della Guarda’s work suggests then that with Vilanova begins the so called Franco-Catalan family of Angela of Foligno’s manuscripts, specifically with his copy included in a 1311 inventory of his belongings, which also included a few anonymous works in the vernacular.<sup>24</sup> Since Porete’s text also spread together with Angela and other vernacular mystical texts, including too several found in our edict, such as Lull, Ruusbroec, Herp and Tauler, could these include Porete’s? In his testament Arnau leaves all of his belongings with Carthusians to spread

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<sup>22</sup> Donatella Nebbiai-Della Guarda, « Angèle et les Spirituels. À propos des livres d’Arnaud de Villeneuve », *Revue d’Histoire des Textes*, 32, 2002, p. 265-283.

<sup>23</sup> For a recent summary of the debate on Brother A. see “Communities of discourse: religious authority and the role of holy women in the later middle ages” by Carolyn Muessig, in Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, *Women and Experience in Later Medieval Writing: Reading the Book of Life* (Macmillan, 2009). According to Nebbiai-Della Guarda, Arnau and Angela would have met in 1304, five years before Angela’s death. We should note that Angela’s name doesn’t appear in any known chronicle of the Order until the early fifteenth century; a brief notice in the *De conformitate* of Bartolomeo of Pisa (1401); a mention by Francesco Ximenis (ca. 1409); another mention in a brief poem by a Franciscan tertiary in 1465. The only explicit witness to Angela during 1305. As for her confessor, it seems that since C. M Mooney’s essay, “The Authorial Role of Brother A. in the Composition of Angela of Foligno’s Revelations,” no one has returned to the mystery of Brother A’s identity. As Lachance tells us, the name Arnaldo often attributed to him does not appear in the Assisi codex, only the expression “frater A.”, present once in the Memorial and twice in Instruction XXVI. In two manuscripts of the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century he is named Adamo. A=Arnaldus seems to come from a manuscript dated in the fifteenth century. As for the friars who composed the Instructions they are unknown, but many clearly belong to the Spiritual Franciscans faction. See also *Il Liber Della Beata Angela Da Foligno*; Fulginio), *Libro Utile ... Nel Quale Si Contiene La Conversione, Penitentie Et Divine Consolationi*; C. M Mooney, “The Authorial Role of Brother A. in the Composition of Angela of Foligno’s Revelations,” *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance* (1994): 34–63; P. Lachance, *Angela of Foligno: The Passionate Mystic of the Double Abyss* (New City Pr, 2006); Mooney, “The Authorial Role of Brother A. in the Composition of Angela of Foligno’s Revelations”; Angela de Foligno (Santa), *Liber Qui Dicitur Angela De Fulginio, in Quo Ostendit. Nobis Vera via Qua Possum Us Sequi Vestigia Nostri Redemptoris* (Petrus Hagenbach, 1505); Ahlgren, “Angela of Foligno and Teresa of Avila”; At least two dissertations compare the doctrines of Marguerite Porete and Angela of Foligno. Two recent dissertations compare Porete and Angela’s doctrines of annihilation. *Model, mirror and memorial: Imitation of the passion and the annihilation of the imagination in Angela da Foligno’s “Liber” and Marguerite Porete’s “Mirouer des simples ames”* Diss. O’Sullivan, Robin Anne. The University of Chicago, 2002 and *Writing the body of Christ: Hadewijch of Brabant, Angela of Foligno, and Marguerite Porete* Diss. Holmes, Emily A.. Emory University, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> See also J. Perarnau i Espelt, “Tres Notes Entorn De La Biblioteca Papal,” *Arxiu De Textos Catalans Antics* (2006): 299–311 and

throughout Catalan monasteries while Lull seems to have left his with Carthusians to spread throughout the North.<sup>25</sup>

Could there had been a Cisalpine rescue and transmission of Porete and other texts analogous to Kerby-Fulton's Northern European (Carthusian-Bridgettine) one? The northern monastics spread beguine texts. I suggest beguines themselves did so in Cisalpine lands. This is suggested by Vilanova's own *Alia Informatio Beguinorum*, composed to two persecuted groups, one which read Neapolitan and one which read Catalan, evidence pointing to Lull and Arnau as collaborating with other Franciscan spirituals in the transmissions of mystical texts like Porete's; which, when added now to evidence of the *Mirror's* transmission after their deaths, suggests that Porete's book was not exempt from the fate that awaited, in the Cisalpine lands, and in the next centuries, to mystical texts authored by women.

This leads us to ask first, is there any reason to bring together Vilanova's Franciscan beguines with the Northern beguine mystical women? We can answer with Lerner, who in his important essay "Writing and resistance among Beguins of Languedoc and Catalonia," gives us the foundations of the later research I will discuss, yet, surprisingly, he misses a crucial element, one I missed too until now. Lerner decided to follow "arbitrary but standard scholarly usage, [and] distinguish *Beguin* from *beguine*. The latter term usually designates semi-regular women of northern Europe, mostly cloistered, whereas [he uses] *Beguin* to denote male and female Franciscan tertiaries, solely of Languedoc and Catalonia, who gained religious guidance from Spiritual Franciscans."<sup>26</sup> Northern European beguines,

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<sup>25</sup> J. N. Hillgarth, *Ramon Lull and Lullism in Fourteenth-Century France*, Oxford-Warburg Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). *Journal of Savants*, 1896, 378.

<sup>26</sup> *Heresy and Literacy, 1000-1530*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 23 (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 187. More recently, simplifications actually complicate my discussion here. He writes: "... tecnicamente, i beghini erano laici leali a Olivi, a differenza degli spirituali francescani" membri a

distinguished from nuns because of their communal living outside the cloister, and Spiritual Franciscans were condemned together at the Council of Vienne (1311-2), making most of them to become integrated into more orthodox structures, primarily third order Franciscans.<sup>27</sup> Following such usage puts us in an awkward position.

Given that Porete was arrested together with Guiard de Cressonart, her follower (fautor) and leader of a Spiritual Franciscan circle, we would have too much of a difference between the beguines in Porete's circle and the beguines in Guiard's. Reasons for their condemnation are certainly different. The latter were distinguished by their interpretation of Franciscan poverty as absolute and/or the belief in the approaching of an angelic pope who would lead a new religious order composed of *virī spirituales* and who would overcome a papal Antichrist.<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, John XXII's 1318 bull *Gloriosam Ecclesiam* condemned the Spirituals, renamed Celestines under the previous pope, as *fraticelli, seu frates de pauper vita, aut bizzochii sive beghini*.<sup>29</sup> Yet the first two are obviously male, while the last two, while seemingly used in the documents for women, are terms used for groups of lay women that lived as tertiaries, thus indistinguishable from figures like Catherine of Siena or Angela of Foligno. Moreover, Lerner insightful remark about the phrase he finds "stunning" in the earliest versions of the *Mirror*, the claim that the annihilated soul "neither desires nor

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pieno titolo dell'ordine de Francescani, ma per semplificare tralascero questa distinzione."R. lerner "origine..., contenuto e fortuna della Summula pseudo-gioachimita" in G. L. Podestà, *Profezie illustrate Gioachimite alla corte degli Estensi* (Franco Cosimo Panini, 2010), 17. I'll appropriate Kevin Madigan's definition of Franciscan Spirituals as the "rigorist party within the Franciscan order, particularly with the regard to the issue of poverty. Olivi was often seen as their leader and the poisonous source from whom they derived their heretical doctrine." Madigan, *Olivi and the Interpretation of Matthew in the High Middle Ages*.

<sup>27</sup> For the most recent discussion of the origins and etymology problem see Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> For a lengthy comprehensive study going beyond the usual emphasis on the controversies on poverty to include art, literature and missionology see Raoul Manselli *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo* Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo. Especially relevant for our discussion are the chapters "Spirituali e beghini nel Mezzogiorno della Francia" 109-129 and "La politica religiosa di Federico III d'Aragon" 445-455.

<sup>29</sup> Pou y Martí, *Visionarios, Beguinos Y Fraticelos Catalanes (siglos XIII-XV)*, 19.

scorns poverty,” censored in some versions, and the self-identification as a “mendicant creature” whom Franciscans and Beguines misunderstand, points us towards controversies involving both French-Cisalpine Spiritual Franciscans and Franco-Germanic beguine mystics.

John Van Engen’s title *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* helps us explain this confusion. We learn from the book’s opening of his book devoted to the *Devotio Moderna* that in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century this new lay movement was indistinguishable from Northern European friars had founded in three thousand religious houses half of them Franciscan; its female members were labeled ‘beguines’ and to make matters even more complicated, the male were labeled Lollards.<sup>30</sup> Medievalists often identify the latter as followers of Wycliffe and locate the heresy primarily in England.<sup>31</sup> John Van Engen shows us the cultural and religious groups living link within a region fought over by English and French crowns. He thus joins Kerby-Fulton, and others who have blurred the distinction between Franciscans and Lollard. Indeed, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century some ascribed the term Lollard to a late medieval Franciscan named Lolhard!<sup>32</sup>

We should then keep in mind David Burr when he complicates the standard usage, blurring the line between Franciscan

... spirituals and mystics [groups which] were attuned to the same spiritual currents that were reshaping piety at the turn of the [13<sup>th</sup>] century, currents the ecclesiastical hierarchy found intriguing yet also terrifying –precisely because it saw them as in danger of spinning out of control without firm guidance. That guidance often involved attempting to limit new trends by forcing them into existing organizational structures and submitting them to the direction to established authority.... In the case of the female mystics, gender produced an additional complication.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> John H. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 1. For Lollards and vernacular texts see 271-2.

<sup>31</sup> For “Reformation” Lollards see Wendy Case “Lollardy” in David V. N. Bagchi and David Curtis Steinmetz, *The Cambridge Companion To Reformation Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) 15-21. For medieval ones see Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*, Series Q (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion*.

<sup>33</sup> David Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 345.

We can even be more specific. Italian women mystics, such as Angela of Foligno, were a source of inspiration for the Spiritual *zelanti*, a group of Franciscans formed under the leadership of Ubertino de Casale when he, after his encounter with three women mystics, rejected his Parisian learning in favor of an affective spirituality.<sup>34</sup> In addition, not only gender but also geography produced an additional complication. Burr adds to the above the confusion between the northern beguines and southern *beguins*, who followed the teachings of Olivi.<sup>35</sup> At the time, lay women who followed Olivi in the geographical region where most of our dissertation's historical context takes place, the borderlands between today's France and Spain, were also known as beguines. Moreover, as Kerby-Fulton has shown, there is evidence of Olivian thought in the *Mirror* itself.<sup>36</sup> I therefore will join Kerby-Fulton and Burr, for whom a female *beguin* is any holy lay woman; and assume the women are sisters of Spanish *beatas* and Italian *bizzoche*.<sup>37</sup> I suggest that further research, following Lerner in adding a Catalan element, can show that increased travel and communication undermines the standard arbitrary labeling of groups, many of which welcomed as their own exiled others who followed similar persecution.

Louisa Burnham's *So Great a Light, so Great a Smoke: The Beguin Heretics of Languedoc* gives us documentation of an "underground railroad" of persecuted Spirituals into Catalonian territory.<sup>38</sup> We can add this to those discussed in Jill Webster's *Els Menoret*

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<sup>34</sup> Claire Jill R Webster and Institute of Mediaeval Studies Pontifical, *Els Menorets: The Franciscans in the Realms of Aragon from St. Francis to the Black Death* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993), 242. The women are the three lay Franciscans discussed in more depth by Burr: Angela of Foligno, Claire of Montefalco, and Margaret Cortona, three of the "orthodox Tuscan mystics [who] rubbed shoulders" with heretics. Burr, 203 and 315ff.

<sup>35</sup> Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion*, 404.

<sup>36</sup> Fulton, 272.

<sup>37</sup> Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans*, 91.

<sup>38</sup> Louisa A Burnham, *So Great a Light, so Great a Smoke: The Beguin Heretics of Languedoc* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).59 and n.204. Catalonia includes a region that maintained a Frankish culture since it became the first Moorish territory lost to Charlemagne, followed by most of the Iberian peninsula in 1212 at

which traces Catalan spirituals to the persecuted religiosity of the Tuscan *zelanti* who found their inspiration in the writings of Umberto de Casale and Angela of Foligno. Burr too shows traces heretical friars, from Tuscany to the French countryside and down into Catalonia.<sup>39</sup> Joan Cusco i Claraso's study of Catalan texts emphasizes the negative side of the Catalonian reception, beginning with the first European case of a beguine being immolated in Catalonia six years after Porete.<sup>40</sup> Claraso's thesis finds further support in Jill R. Webster's work, which finds evidence of Hispanic monarchical support of persecuted communities of both beguines and Franciscan spirituals as early as the thirteenth century.<sup>41</sup>

In contrast, Elena Botinas i Montero's *Les Beguines* shows the positive side of the Catalan reception, including an extended discussion of texts concerning the fifteenth century beguine community at the monastery of Saint Marguerite of Hungary.<sup>42</sup> Saint Marguerite was but one of those beguine textual communities that during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries were associated with Southern French and northern Spanish monasteries.<sup>43</sup> It was led by a mystic abbess whose spiritual texts are influenced by beguine spirituality, particularly that which we found in Mechthild of Magdeburg. Not only Mechthild, but her companion in our prohibited list, Bridget of Sweden, re-emerges at this time in connection

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the decisive battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, where Christian forces from Castile, Navarre and Aragon joined forces against the Islamic armies. Nevertheless, these three kingdoms battled over France, ruled for most of the thirteenth century by Blanche of Castile and her sons. The disputed territories comprising Southern France remained under the cultural influence of Catalonia, or, as named in the mid 14th century, the Principat of Catalunya, ruled by the Aragonese crowns, whose domain reached beyond Aragon and Barcelona as far as Majorca and Sicily, and threatened to expand into its borders with Castile and Genoa.

<sup>39</sup> Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans*, 214.

<sup>40</sup> Claraso, 25ff.; Montero, 69.

<sup>41</sup> Jill R. Webster *Els Menoret* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> Montero, 84-95, 99. The relation between Marguerite Porete and Marguerite of Hungary remains relatively unexplored, even when manuscripts of the former were attributed to the latter. Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 375; "Giorgio Cini." *Fondazione and Tudományos Akadémia Magyar, Spiritualità E Lettere Nella Cultura Italiana E Ungherese Del Basso Medioevo, Civiltà Veneziana* 46 (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1995); Marguerite Porete, *Lo Specchio Delle Anime Semplici, Classici Del Pensiero Cristiano* 9 (Cinisello Balsamo (Milano).

<sup>43</sup> Joan Cusco i Claraso, *Els Beguins: L'heretgia a la Catalunya Medieval* Script et Documenta (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadía de Montserrat, 2005); Montero, 84-95, 99.

with the monastery. We know that after Bridget's death, Carthusians and other monastics translate her *Revelationes* into several languages, including Spanish dialects, since some of the nuns belonging to the Bridgettine order sought refuge in what would become Spain.<sup>44</sup> Some Catalanian beguines shared a tradition of being in contact with Bridget and their disciples, a tradition they used to explain their veneration for the relics of Bridget held at the time by one of them.<sup>45</sup> They found royal support for their communities. For example, in 1332, chaplains at the Santa Clara monastery were accused of heresy. Their patroness, Queen Sancha, also became a Clare nun at the monastery of Santa Creu in Naples, where she hid books suspected of heterodoxy. After her death, the pope ordered the sisters to hand over any *fardellos* packages of books related to her or Spiritual leaders such as Cesena or Clarenò, who in 1337 was considered their supreme leader. Clarenò leaves Subiaco in 1337 and moves to Naples, at the Basilicata, where he dies.<sup>46</sup>

It has been argued that a Franciscan Spiritual in Catalan Naples translated the *Mirror* into Italian in the 14th century.<sup>47</sup> We cannot identify the translator with the leader of Spirituals Angelo Clarenò; yet we know that at the beginning of the century Clarenò takes refuge at the Benedictine abbey at Subiaco, where scribes almost sent to press a Latin version of the *Mirror* two centuries later. We do not know when the monastery acquired the manuscript. Clarenò did possess the first manuscript of another of the prohibited authors, also later published in Catalan, John Climacus. Two different scholars have found

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<sup>44</sup> Christopher De Hamel and Club Roxburghe, *Syon Abbey: The Library of the Bridgettine Nuns and Their Peregrinations After the Reformation: An Essay* (Otley [England]: Printed for The Roxburghe Club, 1991).

<sup>45</sup> Montero, 84-95, 99.

<sup>46</sup> Pou y Martí, *Visionarios, Beguinos Y Fraticelos Catalanes (siglos XIII-XV)*, 142.

<sup>47</sup> "Giorgio Cini." Fondazione and Tudományos Akadémia Magyar, *Spiritualità E Lettere Nella Cultura Italiana E Ungherese Del Basso Medioevo*, *Civiltà Veneziana* 46 (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 1995), 23. For the debate over whether Naples should be considered Catalan see Perarnau,.



independently traces of Climacus in Porete and Angela of Foligno<sup>48</sup> Considered to be rare at this time, Climacus and other patristic authors were numerous in Spiritual Franciscan libraries.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, Climacus, together with Angela of Foligno and Mechthild of Hackeborn, were the first spiritual texts published at the Benedictine abbey of Montserrat. But why would there be any link between these Spirituals and the *Mirror*?

We may find one answer in Saturnino Lopez Santidrián's thesis, one of the few to link Porete with Franciscan radical ideas into what he identifies as "annihilative poverty," a doctrine he claims was crucial for the development of Hispanic spirituality.<sup>50</sup> Others have followed too but without explaining the similarities.<sup>51</sup> They make sense only if we remember that Porete's theology of annihilation was popularized through her influence on Meister Eckhart's famous sermon on poverty.<sup>52</sup> We may bring it together with Colledge's hypothesis, sympathy for radical doctrines of deification would spread Eckhart and Porete's ideas throughout Benedictine and Carthusian monasteries. Elaborating on Colledge's remarks I will

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<sup>48</sup> Cini, 182. See also Ottorino Gurgo, *Celestino v e gli spirituali: dalle profezie di Gioacchino da Fiore alle dieci illuminazioni* (Mamma Editori, 1998), 10ff.; Albert Hauf, *D'Eiximenis a Sor Isabel De Villena: Aportació a L'estudi De La Nostra Cultura Medieval*, 1. ed, Biblioteca Sanchis Guarner 19 (Barcelona: Institut de Filologia Valenciana, 1990), 29; Convegno, *Giovanni Climaco E Il Sinai: Atti Del IX Convegno Ecumenico Internazionale Di Spiritualità Ortodossa, Sezione Bizantina, Bose, 16-18 Settembre 2001*, Spiritualità Orientale (Magnano (BI): Edizioni Qiqajon, Comunità di Bose, 2002), 281 .

<sup>49</sup> That is after the first Catalan translation in 1438. Comité international de paléographie latine. Coloquio and Herrad Spilling, *La Collaboration Dans La Production De L'écrit Médiéval* (Librairie Droz, 2003).

<sup>50</sup> Saturnino López Santidrián, *Decurso de la heterodoxia mística y origen del alumbradismo en Castilla* (Facultad de Teología del Norte de España, 1981).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.; Pere Santonja, *La Influencia De La Cultura Judía En La Obra De Arnau De Vilanova [1238?-1311]: La Espiritualidad De Su Tiempo* (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 2001); Antonio Márquez, *Los Alumbrados: Orígenes y Filosofía (1525-1559)* (Taurus, 1980); Miguel Asín Palacios and Luce López Baralt, *Šādīlīes y alumbrados* (Hiperión, 1990); Francisco Pons Fuster, *Místicos, Beatas Y Alumbrados: Ribera Y La Espiritualidad Valenciana Del S. XVII*, 1. ed. (Valencia: Edicions Alfons el Magnànim, Institució Valenciana d'Estudis i Investigació, 1991); Sánchez, *Franciscanos, místicos, herejes y alumbrados*; Pere Santonja, *La Herejía De Los Alumbrados Y La Espiritualidad En La España Del Siglo 16: Inquisición Y Sociedad* (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 2001); Alastair Hamilton, *Heresy and Mysticism in Sixteenth-century Spain: The Alumbrados* (James Clarke, 1992); See also the sections "rofetismo e iluminismo" and "iluminismo y erasmismo" in Bataillon, *Erasmus Y España*, 61-71, 166-225.

<sup>52</sup> Edmund C. Colledge and J.C. Marler 'Poverty of the Will: Ruusbroec, Eckhart and The Mirror of Simple Souls' Jan Van Ruusbroec P. Mommaers ed. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984), 14-48; Amy M Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1995).

argue now that in the next centuries the focusing centers of these radical doctrines, at least their textual centers, can be identified with Benedictine monasteries with Franciscan-Carthusian sympathies, monasteries such as Montserrat, St. Giustina and Subiaco.

Between 1440 and 1452, the time when the Crown of Aragón annexed Naples, the Catalan monastery of Montserrat, established close relationships with St. Giustina and Subiaco. Interchange of books occurred among the monasteries, so one of them may have included Porete's *Mirror*, since more than a dozen copies were available at St. Giustina for a few decades and Subiaco was ready to publish it a few decades later.<sup>53</sup> Both monasteries established links to the region in order to help circulate mystical literature devoted to help the spiritual development, not of monastics but of the laity.<sup>54</sup> Montserrat's first published texts were rare tomes that nevertheless were common in Spiritual Franciscan libraries, such as the nearby one belonging to Vilanova.<sup>55</sup> Since parallels can be established with vernacular translations of medieval women mystics such as Mechthild of Hackeborn or Angela of Foligno, could the Montserrat abbey have helped publish a Catalan version of Marguerite Porete?<sup>56</sup>

I argue that, if Subiaco could have been the first to publish it, Montserrat, the first to publish Angela of Foligno, either came a close second or, more probably, participated, perhaps unknowingly, of the first printed version of selections from the *Mirror*.<sup>57</sup> Italian and

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<sup>53</sup> For the *Devotio Moderna* in up to and including the time Ignatius of Loyola lived there see "La Devotio Moderna en el Montserrat de san Ignacio," Leturia, 73-89.

<sup>54</sup> Fuller, *The Brotherhood of the Common Life and Its Influence*, 154.

<sup>55</sup> Società, Centro, and Fondazione, *Libri, Biblioteche E Letture Dei Frati Mendicanti (secoli XIII-XIV)*.

<sup>56</sup> José Vives, "Una singular traducción catalana del Memorial de Angela de Foligno," *Gesammelte Aufsätze Zur Kulturgeschichte Spaniens*, Spanische Forschungen Der Görresellschaft, Reihe 1 (MÜNSTER IN WESTFALEN: <S.N.>, 1928); italiana per lo studio del pensiero medievale Società, *Filosofia in Volgare Nel Medioevo: Atti Del Convegno Della Società Italiana Per Lo Studio Del Pensiero Medievale (S.I.S.P.M.), Lecce, 27-29 Settembre 2002*, *Textes Et Études Du Moyen Âge* 21 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération internationale des instituts d'études médiévales, 2003).

<sup>57</sup> For some recent works on the "Early modern" Angela see "Angela da Foligno: A Paradigm of Venetian Spirituality in the Sixteenth Century" by Marion Leathers Kuntz, *Venice, Myth and Utopian Thought in the*

Spanish incunabula of the sermons of Bernardino da Siena (d.1444) warn against heretical spiritual ideas about annihilation, carnal and bestial love, and the benefits of Christ, taught in that heretical book “called animarum simplicium.”<sup>58</sup> We also know that between 1496 and 1499 the head of Montserrat, Benedictine Abbot García Jiménez de Cisneros traveled throughout France seeking “modern” spiritual books to translate and, taking advantage of that modern invention, the printing press, to print so as to further increase the circulation of mystical texts among beguines and nuns, under his spiritual direction.<sup>59</sup> He would be aware of another Franciscan echoing Bernardino’s warnings. Incunabula by Pacifico de Novara includes the friar’s denunciation of those who ascribe to themselves a spirit of freedom that allows them to do as they wish, those who follow the errors of “the Simple Soul.”<sup>60</sup> And we find a final example of an incunabula found by an anonymous Celestinian monk who paraphrased and toned down the only surviving complete Middle French text of the Mirror, (the Chantilly manuscript).<sup>61</sup> Scholars take as almost certain that this is the copy read by

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*Sixteenth-century: Bodin, Postel and the Virgin of Venice*, Variorum Collected Studies Series CS668 (Aldershot, Hampshire, Great Britain ; Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999); “Transgendering the Mystical Voice”; Ahlgren, “Angela of Foligno and Teresa of Avila”; *Angela Da Foligno E Il Suo Culto*; Lachance, *Angela of Foligno*.

<sup>58</sup> See sermons LV and LVI. It is in the former where we read : “Abfque cruce gratia meritoria delectabilis atque caelestialis devenit in admirabilem annihilationem, sicut per experientiam palet in iis qui seguuntur spiritum amoris et spiritum libertatis, aut librum haereticum qui dicitur Animarum simplicium.” Bernardinus (Senensis) and Pietro Ridolfi, *Opera Quae Extant Omnia: Vti Eorum Omnium Elenchus Indicabit. Quadragesimale De Evangelio Aeterno* (Iunta, 1591), 625.

<sup>59</sup> Leturia, 79.

<sup>60</sup> “fpirito de liberta potereufare como fi vole. Ho cō lo errori di quelli de lanima fimplice” Le P. Pacifico da Novara (O.F.M.), *Sumula de pacifica conscientia, composta dal P. Pacifico da Novara*, 1479. I consulted Pacifico da Novara, *Summa confessionis intitulata pacifica conscientia* (s.n, 1509), 15r; original from the Complutense University of Madrid.

<sup>61</sup> For example, when the moment comes to say “the soul takes leave of the virtues” he changes it to “takes leave of the world and the world takes leave of her.” *Le Livre De La Discipline De Lamour Divine, La Repetition De La Disciple, Avec Les Proprietes Damour Seraphique*. ([Paris, 1519). I consulted Houghton Library’s edition “Le Livre De La Discipline De Lamour Divine, La Repetition De La Disciple, Avec Les Proprietes Damour Seraphique. Fait a paris ce .xxviii. iour de nouëbre pour regnault chaudiere libraire demourant a lenseigne de lhomme sauuaige en la rue saïct iacques. Lan mil.v.cxix. Caption on 2d prelim. leaf: Sensuyt la table du liure intitule la discipline damour diuine fait, cōpose, et escript ou monastere des celestīs de nostre dame dābert es forestz dorleans lan mil quatre cens soixante et dix. ([Paris, 1519).

Queen Marguerite of Navarre.<sup>62</sup> But again the Hispanic context may complicate our current picture.

Spanish *mística teología*, the definition of which varies slightly from author to author, could be said to begin at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Golden Age with Cisneros' *Exercitatorio de la Vida Espiritual*. As I discuss in more depth next chapter by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century had become center of a spiritual reformation inspired by the *devotio moderna* and initiated when Cisneros published his *Exercitatorio de la Vida Espiritual*, a translation and paraphrase of spiritual sources for the "simple" and "spiritual," lay men and women without much education, those like the young pilgrim he met at Montserrat, Ignatius of Loyola.<sup>63</sup> Ignatius would have read in this *devotio moderna* classic passages from Gertrude of Helfta, Hugh of Balma and other Rhenish mystics; indeed, like its textual basis, the other *devotio moderna* classic Mombaer's *Rosetum or Rosearie de exercises spirituels*, most of it consists of literal translations of authors included in the edict's prohibited books. Ignatius' own *Spiritual Exercises* therefore are indebted not only to Cisneros as historians have noted but to Mombaer and the Low Countries spirituality associated with the *devotio moderna*.<sup>64</sup> Given this, could a hypothetical Catalan manuscript of Porete that would have served as basis for Cordoni, be another inspiring text for the Ignatian and other "early modern" reformation orders, one ignored by historians?

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<sup>62</sup> Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor*, 205; Kocher, "Marguerite De Navarre's Portrait of Marguerite Porete."

<sup>63</sup> Those who have studied it have done so because of its connection with Ignatius. For a study in English of the *Exercitatorio* see Terence O'Reilly "The Structural Unity of the *Exercitatorio de la Vida Espiritual*" in *From Ignatius Loyola to John of the Cross* (Aldershot, U.K. : Variorum, 1995). See also "Exercitatorio" in Leturia, *Estudios Ignacianos I* (Roma: Institutum Historicum S. I, 1957). O. Steggink and O. CARM, "Iñigo López De Loyola, De Pelgrim Van Montserrat Uit Het Baskenland, En De Moderne Devotie," *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 78, no. 2 (2004): 184–193.

<sup>64</sup> See Javier Melloni Rivas SJ "Las influencias cisnerianas de los ejercicios" and "Relaciones de San Ignacio con los Cartujos como causa del influjo de la tradición cartujana sobre los Ejercicios Espirituales" in *Las Fuentes De Los Ejercicios Espirituales De San Ignacio. Actas Del Simposio Internacional [Loyola, 15-19 Septiembre 1997]* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 1998).

I argue the first case would be the Benedictine order. In his study *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation: The Congregation of Santa Giustina de Padua*, Barry Collet discusses the reformed theology of Montserrat's twin, the Cassinese Benedictine Congregation' created in 1505 when Montecassino joined St. Giustina and other monasteries into one congregation.<sup>65</sup> His study attempts to trace, from a patristic perspective, their *sola fide* "concept of justification, which was very close to, but pre-dated Luther," a concept used to establish a compromise between Protestant views on justification and salvation at the Council of Trent."<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, Collet ignores that these congregations held the largest concentration ever of manuscript versions of Marguerite Porete's *Mirror*, one edited version almost ready to publish but cancelled at the last moment, making Cordoni's version the first printed version to back up by patristic teaching what medievalist Michael Sells has identified as Porete's doctrine of "apophysis of desire [which] might seem an unexceptional doctrine of salvation through faith rather than works [until it] is then pushed to the extreme."<sup>67</sup> Collet does briefly mentions that these Benedictines have a little understood relationship with "early modern" Italian spirituali, who

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<sup>65</sup> Massimo Zaggia, *La congregazione Benedettina Cassinese nel Cinquecento* (Olschki, 2003); Barry Collett, *Italian Benedictine Scholars and the Reformation: The Congregation of Santa Giustina of Padua* (Clarendon Press, 1985), 9.

<sup>66</sup> Camilla Russell, *Giulia Gonzaga and the religious controversies of sixteenth-century Italy* (Brepols, 2006)

<sup>67</sup> Michael Anthony Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Collett, *Italian Benedictine scholars and the Reformation*. In the next chapter I show that what Sells describes parallels almost word by word the purportedly original Ignatian doctrine of *indiferencia*. Ignatius may have read Porete at the Monastery of Montserrat. I discuss such possibility, and the relationship between mystical and Lutheran versions of "sola fide," favored by the early modern "spirituals (spirituali). Compare Ignatius' "Act as if everything depended on you; trust as if everything depended on God" to Pole's "Act as if you could only be saved by works. Believe as if you could only be saved by faith." Baernstein, 33; Mayer, 134. Mayer connects Pole here to spirituali Ambrogio catarino Politi, whom Caravale connects to Cordoni. See Giorgio Caravale, *Sulle Tracce Dell'eresia: Ambrogio Catarino Politi (1484-1553)*, Studi e Testi Per La Storia Religiosa Del Cinquecento 14 (Firenze: L. S. Olschki, 2007).70. For a definition of Ignatius' purportedly original doctrine see "Indiferencia," Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana, *Diccionario De Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, Colección Manresa 37-38 (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2007). In 1687 the papal bull *Coelestis Pater* condemned such an "indifference" mystical doctrine, not surprisingly giving its similarities to heretical, primarily Lutheran and quietistic, teachings. See *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism*, (New York: Modern Library, 2006). Ignatius was accused of holding "Lutheran" and/or "quietistic" views four (!) times, more than any other individual of the period; yet never found guilty. See Cacho Nazábal, *Iñigo De Loyola, El Heterodoxo*.

shared both their desire for reform without schism and their doctrine of salvation through faith rather than works. But even as he wishes to avoid those who take out Luther out of his historical context, granting him direct access to an original Pauline Christianity unmediated by the Middle Ages, he does the same by engaging in an unnecessary explanation of how Benedictines conceived of a Pauline-“Lutheran” doctrine of salvation through faith rather than works.

A second case would be those various lay movements originating in Northern Italy at the turn of the century. In contrast to Collet, Constantio Cargnoni does make us aware of the role Porete, via Cordoni, plays during these times though remaining on the “Catholic” side of the 16<sup>th</sup> century divide. Before turning directly to the reformati “rigorist” Franciscans, now not Franciscan Olivian *spirituali* but Capuchin, he first precedes their tradition, which for him begins with the “proto-Capuchin” Cordoni, with that of another circle of readers of Marguerite Porete.<sup>68</sup>

Cargnoni’s evidence, and ours, is scant due to the destruction of related materials in inquisitional bonfires. Yet, we have enough evidence to elaborate on Cargnoni’s brief remarks on the *Mirror*. He traces its Italian tradition back to Pope Eugene IV, who belonged to the St. Giustina monastic congregation. We can add that while Eugene IV defended the book’s orthodoxy, a late 15<sup>th</sup> century letter addressed by Eugene IV’s cousin, Gregorio Correr, having as addressee the nun Cecilia Gonzaga, one warning her about a “book named *Speculum Animarum Simplicium*, written by a pseudo-woman and containing nothing but

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<sup>68</sup> C. Cargnoni, “Fonti, Tendenze e Sviluppo Della Letteratura Spirituale Cappuccina Primitiva” (1978), 41. See also his “Complessità Teologiche e Ascendenze Spiritualità Del Circolo De Carità Divina Di Francesco Ripanti Da Jesi,” *Collectanea Franciscana* 60, no. 3–4 (1990): 615–663; *I Frati Cappuccini: Documenti E Testimonianze Del Primo Secolo* (Perugia: EFI, 1988). For the wider historical-spiritual context see his *Storia Della Spiritualità Italiana* (Città Nuova, 2002), 184, 286, 426. Rusconi briefly mentions Cordoni’s book in relation to Reformation Franciscans. See his essay in *Identités Franciscaines À L’âge Des Réformes*, Collection “Histoires Croisées” (Clermond-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2005), 395.

delirious dreams.”<sup>69</sup> She probably ignored him and kept a copy in her “book-lined cell,” to appropriate the title of a study on Gonzaga and other women humanists.<sup>70</sup> I mention this now not only because, as we will see in the next chapters, Jesuits developed strong ministerial connections with the Gonzaga family, supporters of the Benedictine monasteries we have been discussing. Luigi Gonzaga will follow the example of Cecilia, and of his own great-aunt, Giulia, and join the Jesuits, becoming canonized soon after his death from treating plague victims. After he enters the novitiate, he becomes influenced by the circle formed to which Giulia belonged, linked first around Catherine of Genoa (†1510) and Lorenzo Giustiniani (†1527), director at the mentioned Congregation of St. Giustina. Luigi read their writings together with those of that other reader of Porete, Giacomone da Todi, so if he read Porete he would have read it after it appeared in these circles.<sup>71</sup> Catherine of Genoa was godmother of Battistina Vernazza, whose father Ettore Vernaza, founded the Oratory of Divine Love, in which, and as we will see in later chapters, several Jesuits, participated.<sup>72</sup> The relationship between all these Spanish and “Italian” groups involved in reformation and their reading of mystical theologians like Porete begs for further study, especially when raising the issue of what all these transformations going on among religious orders have to do with the events after the “dividing” year 1517.

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<sup>69</sup> Blanca Garí, ed, Margarita Porete, *El espejo de las almas simples* (Siruela, 2005) Anónimo" Hermana Katrei (n.d.) (Siruela, 2005), 4ff.

<sup>70</sup> Margaret L. King, *Humanism, Venice, and Women: Essays on the Italian Renaissance* (Ashgate, 2005). 184, 286, 426.

<sup>71</sup> Leturia, *Estudios Ignacianos*, 321.

<sup>72</sup> Not surprisingly, both Guarnieri and Zito find similarities between Porete and Giulia Gonzaga, though focusing only on the possibility that the latter read the Italian translations of the former. With stabler and Russell we could associate her circles closer with beguines. Compare Sabler who ascribes the lemma “Now she is Martha, Now she is Mary” to 15th c. beguines’ call to a life integrating both action and contemplation and Russel’s claim about her 15th c. Italian “circles where, Savonarolan reformist ideas were being mingled with Erasmian Christian humanism, while the popular Oratory of Divine Love, as well as the medieval mystical tradition of imitatio Christi, provided the framework of individual and interior religiosity underpinned by charitable works.” Romana Guarnieri, *Donne E Chiesa Tra Mistica E Istituzioni, Secoli XIII-XV* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2004); Zito, *Giulia E L’inquisitore*; Camilla Russell, *Giulia Gonzaga and the Religious Controversies of Sixteenth-century Italy* (Brepols, 2006), 272-96.

### 2.3 Early 16<sup>th</sup> century

Most historians remember 1517 as the year Luther posted his Theses at Wittenberg. Few remember that year as the time when Giuliano de' Medici, Pope Clement VII divides the Franciscans into Observants, Order of Friars Minor (OFM), and Conventuals. Even fewer remember that year as the time when the Spanish Conventuals, or *non-reformati*, take up arms against *reformati* Observants. Throughout his life, Ignatius of Loyola did remember. That year he became a royal courtier, serving the Spanish viceroy of Navarre, who often sent him to stop the violence between bands of fighting friars. He may not have had a favorable view of Franciscan friars until the 1520's when, in battle against the French side of the kingdom of Navarre, a cannonball shattered the leg of a Spanish soldier from Loyola. Vain about his appearance and knightly status, he asked his doctors to re-break his leg so that he could continue to wear "the close-fitting boots currently in fashion." Bored while recuperating at his castle, the soldier requested "books of worldly fiction, commonly called chivalrous romances...to pass the time."<sup>73</sup>

But the castle's library was not as accommodating as his surgeons; the soldier had to make do with a book of saints' lives. Narrating his own *Pilgrim's Testament*, a text best known the *Autobiography*, St. Ignatius of Loyola locates his transformation from a worldly knight to a "knight of God" in the textual examples of St. Francis.

We will discuss in depth the *Autobiography* in the next chapter. Here we begin with a travel memoir edited and published only a few years ago, *Diego Laínez SJ: First Biographer of*

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<sup>73</sup> Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Vida del P. Ignacio de Loyola fundador de la ... Compañía de Jesus* (por Alonso Gomez Impresor de su Magestad, 1583).



*Saint Ignatius of Loyola: His Life, the Biography, and Polanco's Narrative.*"<sup>74</sup> There one of Ignatius' companions recalls:

"It is hard to imagine all the difficulties [Ignatius] faced in ten years of study in Paris .... [though] by means of the Carthusians and the Canons of St. Victor [he] found many possibilities.... Advised that in Flanders they gave alms to some students, it was suggested that he go there to beg, and he did so, going there for two years, and another to England as well..."<sup>75</sup>

Here we read often forgotten details about Ignatius's early 16<sup>th</sup> century pilgrimage and student years when he and his often forgotten companions travelled throughout Europe reaching as far as its northernmost part, which by then had become the Spanish "Flanders" Netherlands, reigned by Charles V and rapidly transforming itself into a center of intellectual debate at the frontier line of the Counter-Reformation. As a pilgrim along this frontier line he found towns like Tournai, where some of the first female beguinages appeared, and Valenciennes, where Porete, whom Jean Gerson named "Marie de Valenciennes," saw her manuscript burned. As a student he witnessed how Marguerite de Navarre's brother "Francis I, King of France, wanted to burn many heretics, who abounded in Paris then."<sup>76</sup> Later Jesuit Counter-Reformation activities arose in part influenced by the encounter between the early Ignatians and the spiritual centers of the Counter-Reform, the Carthusian monasteries that served as repositories of the Roman Catholic heritage. As Ignatius later wrote to a nun, during these days he met several religious men and women, including a Carthusian with whom he "spent eight blissful days in mystical colloquy."<sup>77</sup> Jesuits later will help spread the word about mystical authors from these lands such as Tauler, Ruusbroec, Suso, and those involved with the *Devotio Moderna* movement influenced much of the

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<sup>74</sup> Antonio Albuquerque ed, *Diego Lainez SJ: First Biographer of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: His Life, the Biography, and Polanco's Narrative* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2010).

<sup>75</sup> Albuquerque ed, 119.

<sup>76</sup> Albuquerque ed, 119.

<sup>77</sup> *St. Ignatius Loyola: Letters to Women* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2007), 330.

religious world that welcomed Ignatius and his companions. We will see how it influenced Ignatius in the next chapter via Hispanic Franciscan spirituality.

Part of this world included what Kevin-Fulton and Burnham together above detailed as an underground railroad of Carthusian, Franciscans and beguine books and their readers. Similarly, Jonathan A Reid details an underground railroad of “Evangelical Protestant” books and their readers in his *King’s Sister--Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549) and Her Evangelical Network*. He only includes early modern “Protestant” books but perhaps we should add one of the many versions of the Mirror to the recent scholarship, not only the French ones that Hasenhor discusses. Her fate certainly converges with both Porete’s and Ignatius’ avalanches.

Marguerite de Navarre supported the reforming ideas of at least two, perhaps three English queens that some scholars have linked to the Mirror, and those of French and Spanish Franciscan Spirituals linked to proto-feminist ideas and to “Lutheran heresies” linked to beguines, Beghards, and the hypothetical Catalan *Mirror*.<sup>78</sup> In 1521 a friar arrived at her court and announced that an anonymous Italian Franciscan, together with humanists Erasmus, Reuchlin and D’Etaples were none other than the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.<sup>79</sup> And if we are to believe Ignatius’ school companion at Paris, not yet Protestant John Calvin, lectured her in 1525 for protecting the “Fantastic and Furious Sect of the Libertines Who Are Called 'Spirituals.’”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Queens Anne Boleyn, Katherine Parr and Elizabeth I. Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn: “The Most Happy”* (Blackwell Pub, 2005), 278, 295. S. Snyder, “Guilty Sisters: Marguerite De Navarre, Elizabeth of England, and the Miroir De L’âme Pécheresse,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1997): 443–458; S.W. May and A.L. Prescott, “The French Verses of Elizabeth I (Text),” *English Literary Renaissance* 24, no. 1 (1994): 9–43; Marc Shell, *Elizabeth’s Glass: With “The Glass of the Sinful Soul” (1544) by Elizabeth I, and “Epistle Dedicatory” & “Conclusion” (1548) by John Bale* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993). Add Margaret BeaufortParkin, *The Humor of Marguerite De Navarre in the Heptaméron*; Lisa Renée Perfetti, *Women & Laughter in Medieval Comic Literature* (University of Michigan Press, 2003).

<sup>79</sup> *The Prisons of Marguerite De Navarre*; Reid, *King’s Sister--Queen of Dissent*, 140.

<sup>80</sup> “Calvin Against the Libertines”



In the print above Calvin preaches against libertines at St. Peter in Paris, the same year the memoir above tells Ignatius preached at that parish. No mention there of these libertines. Still, although associated with too many “heretical” groups, they do represent another example of how radical groups spread in Marguerite’s kingdom, Navarra, which, together with the kingdoms of Aragón, Catalonia and Valencia, were exempt from the censorship on incoming books, at least until their Spanish crown annexed them.<sup>81</sup> These would have included Italian and Spanish Franciscan books, which Marguerite read as a child in the royal household; her mother insisting that the princess learn with a Franciscan tutor.<sup>82</sup>

It was after the Spanish crown annexed Navarre and after the battle of Pavia, the outcomes of which cemented Spanish imperial ascendancy in Europe, and during the imprisonment of her brother Francis I, that Marguerite de Navarre’s fate converges with that of other fervid Franciscans, future Jesuits Ignatius Loyola and Francisco Borgia.<sup>83</sup> The last two belonged to emperor Charles V’ entourage so perhaps some of the unidentified figures above represent them along those of Marguerite, shown below in 1525, and those of prisoner Francis I and emperor Charles V. Perhaps later Jesuits gained easily the support of

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<sup>81</sup> Queen Marguerite would know since the Inquisition placed her name among those of suspicious writers, later condemning her highly popular *Heptameron* together with its inspiration, Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. Cholakian, *Rape and Writing in the Heptaméron of Marguerite De Navarre*, 5. See also Koher and Dagens, op.cit.

<sup>82</sup> *The Prisons of Marguerite De Navarre*, x; Reid, *King’s Sister--Queen of Dissent*, 108.

<sup>83</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, Borgia and the first Jesuits shared and increased their love of Franciscan spirituality when Borgia became duke of the now Spanish Low Countries, a love he transferred to those works Jesuits published under him. Borgia met Ignatius as a young man, when he served as courtier to the same royal families that Ignatius did before him. As duke of Gandía, Borgia established close friendships with other leading figures of Renaissance Europe, including humanist Erasmus and Vives.

the reader of beguines, given that she quickly became interested in the Jesuits' reconciliation between the teachings of contemplative mysticism and the vocation to an active life. She would become the first of many patrons, mostly female, of future Jesuits, thus all of them becoming midwives preparing a space so that Ignatius could give birth to the Society of Jesus.<sup>84</sup>

Ignatius' *spirituali* companions established ministerial relationships with Marguerite de Navarre's network which I wish to extend so as to include not only the late medieval ones discussed above but also the early modern Franciscan *spirituali*, beginning with proto-capuchin Cordoni, and the other royal *spirituali*, all of whom seem to have an obscure relationship to Cordoni's version of the *Mirror*, Italian humanist such as Contarini and Bembo, Reginald Pole, a cardinal and claimant to the English throne; De Navarre's friend and Pole's spiritual daughter, Italian poet Vittoria Colonna, marchioness of Pescara, and the Catalanian third duke of Gandía himself, later to take over Ignatius' role as Jesuit general. We should briefly say something of each of these leading historical actors.

Ignatius did not stay long in Northern Europe, returning soon to Spain, where he interacted with Franciscan beguines and perhaps Cordoni himself. He did so not before sending the Navarrese Favre to stay in northern Europe with the Carthusians at Cologne, where the Navarrese also became close with the circle of Meaux surrounding queen Marguerite de Navarre and Lefevre D'Étaples. As we will see after discussing Ignatius, it is Favre who best exemplifies the early Jesuits' relations with Franciscans, Carthusians, and the

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<sup>84</sup>O. Hufton, "Altruism and Reciprocity: The Early Jesuits and Their Female Patrons," *Renaissance Studies* 15, no. 3 (2001): 328–353; C. Franceschini, *Los Scholares Son Cosa De Su Excelentia, Como Lo Es Toda La Compañia: Eleonora Di Toledo and the Jesuits* (Ashgate, 2004). In all of these we find a "spiritual twin" in Cardinal Reginald Pole Thomas F Mayer, *Reginald Pole: Prince & Prophet* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 128. Perhaps the inspiration lies in Eckhart's famous sermon. Accusations of holding "errori di Beghardi" haunted Jesuits and other early modern religious orders. See Gerónimo Nadal, *Contemplatif Dans L'action: Écrits Spirituels Ignatiens (1535-1575)* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1994); Baernstein, 38 and Guarnieri,. Marguerite de Navarre's motto? *Never shall a human being attain to the perfect love of God who has not loved to perfection some creature in this world.*

Counter-Reformation publication of mystical texts. Ignatius's story comes closer to the early modern equivalent of late medieval Franciscan Spirituals, the Capuchins.

While some work has been done on the relationship between the late medieval Franciscan *spirituali* and the "reformed" or rigorist early modern branch of the order the Capuchin, it is surprising that the relationship between them and the Jesuits has barely been studied.<sup>85</sup> If we follow Cargnoni, begin the history of Capuchin spirituality immediately with a *spirituali* proto-Capuchin Cordoni, even though purportedly unrelated to the ones condemned a century and a half earlier, then we should continue it with the fact that a version of Cordoni, approved by Milan's inquisitor, Girolamo da Molfetta circulated throughout conventicles of Spanish and Italian heretical *alumbrados*, linked to women and Jews and Muslim converts, but also to women such as the circle of devotees surrounding Paola Antonia Negri and that around women living nearby various monasteries associated with St. Giustina, including Catalonian Montserrat.

Just as Jesuit spirituality can be said to begin at Montserrat with Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* (discussed next chapter), Capuchin spirituality can be said to begin also at Montserrat with Giovanni Pili da Fano' *Dialogue on Union*.<sup>86</sup> Benedictine monk Cisneros' *Exercitatorio* inspired Ignatius' foundational text. It also inspired Fano's 1534 book, which amalgamates the *Exercitatorio* with an early manuscript of Italian Franciscan Cordoni's

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<sup>85</sup> Even in a recent collection responding to the fact that "Italy's own experience of reform and Reformation has remained relatively unexplored" they do not appear. Abigail Brundin and Matthew Treherne, *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, 2009); For Franciscan Spirituals and the Capuchins see the summary of the scholarship, actually two books, in Thaddeus MacVicar, *The Franciscan Spirituals and the Capuchin Reform*, Franciscan Institute Publications no. 5 (St. Bonaventure, N.Y: Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, 1986), 1.

<sup>86</sup> Available at [www.capdox.com/alt/](http://www.capdox.com/alt/). Primarily for English language Capuchin Friars, this excellent but seemingly never cited source capdox should be useful for anyone interested in reform movements in Italy in the first half of the 16th Century.

*Dyalogo* and Low Countries Franciscan Heinrich Herp' *Directorio de Contemplativos*.<sup>87</sup> Late 16<sup>th</sup> century Jesuits will prohibit the reading of Herp, who will head northern European versions of the edict together with Erasmus and Vives, seemingly associating the three as *devotio moderna* authors. Less well known is that Herp's first vernacular translation, an Iberian version published in Venice, became so popular among our early 16<sup>th</sup> century Jesuits that copies have been found as far as Japan. The first Jesuit missionaries included it among the few possessions they carried with them in their travel across the globe. As we will see below, the Latin version, published by the Carthusians, had an unusual dedicatee, Ignatius of Loyola himself. Was this Iberian vernacular version crucial for both Jesuits and Capuchins? And if so, does Fano's amalgamation suggest that Cordoni may have too?<sup>88</sup>

All we know is that the year after Fano composed his compilation, Cordoni the proto-Capuchin traveled throughout the Iberian peninsula with a Franciscan Spiritual, "John the Spaniard."<sup>89</sup> They and their disciples, which seem to have included Fano, claimed Cordoni to have composed there a new *Dialogue on Union with God*. Perhaps Cordoni's brief sojourn in Portugal has something to do with the recently studied documents supporting a strong Franciscan Joachim's gaining strength there.<sup>90</sup> In any case, the latter anonymous version, his Catalan *Dyalogo de la Union*, shows that its author imbibed those doctrines of radical poverty, annihilation and deification that in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, especially

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<sup>87</sup> Antonio Fregona, *I Frati Cappuccini Nel Primo Secolo Di Vita, 1525-1619: Approccio Critico Alle Fonti Storiche, Giuridiche E Letterarie Più Importanti* (Padova: Messaggero, 2006), 80.

<sup>88</sup> For a discussion on the importance of Herp for the first Jesuits and its later condemnation see T.H. Martín "Enrique Herp y la Compañía de Jesús" *Manresa* 1972/4, 361-378.

<sup>89</sup> Muzi, *Memorie Ecclesiastiche e Civili Di Città Di Castello*, 161. Muzi gives a list of all testimonies by those who knew Cordoni. Paola Zambelli attributes the leadership of the expedition to Franciscan Spiritual Giovanni Spagnuolo and identifies Cordoni's companions as Angelo da Botone, Bartolomeo da Spello, Bernardo da Bergamo, Francesco da Montone, Bernardo da San Martino in Campo. *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* - Volume 6 (1964)

<sup>90</sup> José Eduardo Franco, José Augusto Mourão, and Natália Correia, *A influência de Joaquim de Flora em Portugal e na Europa: escritos de Natália Correia sobre a utopia da idade feminina do Espírito Santo* (Roma Editora, 2005); Manuel J. Gandra, *Joaquim De Fiore, Joaquimismo e Esperança Sebástica*, Coleção Lusíada 2 (Lisboa: Fundação Lusíada, 1999).

through the influence of beguines and lay Franciscans, were spreading throughout the recently incorporated Spanish territories. The 1546 printed edition claims to have been translated from the Italian, but no one yet has compared the editions.<sup>91</sup> Since Fano does not include any of the Porete material that appears in the *Dyalogo*, I believe Cordoni's source to have been a lost Catalan manuscript of the Mirror, though so far we only have as evidence the Italian ragazzamiento, which seems to me to have been used in the Italian printed editions. The latter was censored by Cordoni's superiors; it includes an addendum where Cordoni defends himself against charges of heresy by admitting he may have erred and submitting himself to authority. No such addendum appears in the Catalan printed edition. Further research and comparison of the different versions may throw more light on the relation between Porete and later "spiritual" heterodox movements associated with monastic orders.

Notarial documents show that in 1535 spent several months in the ministry of reforming Spanish Franciscan quasi-monastic communities of friars and lay nuns, beguines (beatas).<sup>92</sup> He shared this ministry with Francis Borgia so it is almost certain that Ignatius and Cordoni's paths crossed at least once. Ignatius' planned to meet his companions by the end of the year so that they all together, like Cordoni and his companions, could embark as pilgrims to the Islamic territories. Ignatius and Cordoni may have even departed from Barcelona in the same ship. In any case Cordoni is reported to have died soon after reaching Tunisia. As for Ignatius, we learn from the travel memoir above, that in September 1537 he

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<sup>91</sup> Fol. cxiiiir. I will have to leave for a future study a comparison in depth. For now a quick comparison of passage suggest that it was not based on the censored Italian version but on a manuscript much closer to Marguerite Porete's French manuscript, strengthening Simoncelli's hypothesis about a lost Catalan manuscript circulating among heterodox groups in northeastern Spain.

<sup>92</sup> Cándido de Dalmases, *Monumenta Ignatiana*, Series 4a, *Fontes Documentales* (Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1977), 395. He seems to have inspired Duke Francis Borgia to do the same. See Dalmases, *Francis Borgia*, 36-38.

and Favre stayed at Citá da Castello with Cordoni's family, known there as the Castelli and in Spain as the Castelló, generous patrons of the first Jesuits.<sup>93</sup>

In another travel memoir edited and published only a few years ago, one of Ignatius's companions recalls how they stayed at one of the Italian conventicles associated with St. Giustina.

For the Marchioness of Pescara, well known and devout person, who happened to be at the city at the time and was also preparing to go to Jerusalem to visit the holy places, wanted to find out about the Fathers' religious commitment and integrity not in some haphazard way but clearly and directly. And since she had often caught sight of these two in one of the city's churches, she approached one of them one day and asked the man if he was a member of that group of Paris theologians who were waiting for an opportunity to sail to Jerusalem. When she found that out she further asked where they were staying and learned it was at the hospice of the poor she goes at once while we were out and carefully asks the woman taking care of the place who are these companions and what are they like. And she responds in great detail: "Obviously they are saints ..."<sup>94</sup>

Scholars who associate Ignatius with orthodoxy forget his association with leading *spirituali* heterodox leaders but here we find the earliest evidence, discussed in more depth in the next chapter, that Ignatius stayed in those "mixed" hospices now known to have been run by Franciscan beguines. many of which found financial support in the patronage of royal *spiritual*.<sup>95</sup> Scholarship has identified the Marchioness of Pescara, Vittoria Colonna, as a close friend and correspondent of Marguerite of Navarre, as the catalyst for the approval of the Capuchin rule, and as a member of the Italian *spirituali*. No one yet has identified her as playing a similar role for Jesuits. Above she typifies for us the relation women patrons like

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<sup>93</sup> Albuquerque, *Diego Lainez SJ*, 153. Letter Number 4234, Institute of Jesuit Sources, *Polanco the Writings of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: The Works (opera), the Letters (epistolae)*, Pre-release version 0.9. (St. Louis, Mo: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996). For a brief discussion of Capuchins-Ignatian ministry see Stanislaw da Campagnola "L'umbria e I primi Insediamenti Cappucini" I Cappuccini nell'Umbria Del Cinquecento, 1525-1619, 108, 273.

<sup>94</sup> Simão Rodrigues, *A Brief and Exact Account: The Recollections of Simão Rodrigues on the Origin and Progress of the Society of Jesus* (Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 70.

<sup>95</sup> Ignacio Cacho Nazábal, *Iñigo De Loyola, El Heterodoxo* (San Sebastián: Universidad de Deusto, 2006).



Marguerite de Navarre, and now Vittoria Colonna, had with reformed Franciscans and other *spirituali* priests.

Ignatius' letters show that before departing for Jerusalem in 1537, he placed himself under the spiritual guidance of *spirituali* priest Andrea Lippomani, prior of the Teutonic monastery in Venice, right across the palace of Italian diplomat and cardinal Gasparo Contarini, member of the Oratory of Divine Love and one of the first supporters of the future Jesuits.<sup>96</sup> Both Lippomani and Contarini were among the earliest *spirituali*, earliest proponents of the dialogue with "Lutheran schismatics," perhaps including those "Lutheran Franciscan friars" popularly portrayed at the time by Pietro Aretino in his play *The Secret Lives of Nuns*.<sup>97</sup> Venetian inquisitors found both Lippomani and Contarini guilty of heresy.

Joseph F. Conwell SJ, in his recent study with an appropriately early modern title: *Impelling Spirit: Revisiting a Founding Experience, 1539, Ignatius of Loyola and His Companions : an Exploration Into the Spirit and Aims of the Society of Jesus as Revealed in the Founders' Proposed Papal Letter Approving the Society*, complements other works on Contarini that ignore the Jesuits.<sup>98</sup> The best of these is Furey who seems unaware that she links Contarini to the *Mirror's* tradition via Giustiniani.

As Furey writes, "by infusing ideas with love, Giustiniani demonstrated to Contarini the transformative power of texts."<sup>99</sup> His years as inquisitor, years characterized by his lenient tolerant policy, coincide with the years that Cordoni escaped being placed in the

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<sup>96</sup> Lorenzo Tacchella, *Il Processo Agli Eretici Veronesi Nel 1550: S. Ignazio Di Loyola e Luigi Lippomano (carteggio)* (Morcelliana, 1979).

<sup>97</sup> Pietro Aretino, *The Secret Life of Nuns* (Hesperus, 2004).

<sup>98</sup> Joseph F. Conwell, *Impelling Spirit: Revisiting a Founding Experience, 1539, Ignatius of Loyola and His Companions : an Exploration Into the Spirit and Aims of the Society of Jesus as Revealed in the Founders' Proposed Papal Letter Approving the Society* (Loyola Press, 1997); Furey, *Erasmus, Contarini, and the Religious Republic of Letters*; P. F Grendler, "Gasparo Contarini and the University of Padua," *Heresy, Culture, and Religion in Early Modern Italy: Contexts and Contestations* 76 (2006): 135.

<sup>99</sup> Furey, *Erasmus, Contarini, and the Religious Republic of Letters*.134..

Index of Forbidden Books.<sup>100</sup> Could Giustiniani have suggested the reading of the Mirror to Lippomani, Contarini and/or other spirituali? We know that in the fifteenth century an anonymous member of Lippomani's Teutonic order wrote the *Theologia Germanica*, published by Luther, who attributed it to the Dominican Lebemeister Tauler.<sup>101</sup> Its annihilative language brings it "close to the mystical oneing found in mystics like Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart."<sup>102</sup> We also know that our Franciscan spiritual knights, Ignatius and his companions, may have read the Teutonic knight during their Venetian ministries. They used humanist libraries, including Lippomani's and Contarini's excellent ones. And although surviving documents do not tell us if they read the anonymous knight, they certainly came close to a printed edition of Porete's text. The library belonging to another of their *spirituali* collaborator, humanist Cardinal Pietro Bembo, famous for his love's letter to Lucrezia Borgia, our Borgia's aunt, held, like several others, an Italian edition of Cordoni's *Dialogo*.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Gigliola Fragnito "The Expurgatory Policy of the Church and the Works of Gasparo Contarini," *Heresy, Culture, and Religion in Early Modern Italy: Contexts and Contestations* (Kirksville, Mo: Truman State University Press, 2006).

<sup>101</sup> See W. O. Packull, "Luther and Medieval Mysticism in the Context of Recent Historiography," *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance Et Réforme* 18, no. 2 (1982): 79–93; Bengt Runo Hoffman, *Luther and the Mystics: A Re-Examination of Luther's Spiritual Experience and His Relationship to the Mystics* (Augsburg Pub. House, 1976); S. E. Ozment, *Homo Spiritualis: A Comparative Study of the Anthropology of Johannes Tauler, Jean Gerson and Martin Luther-1509-1516-In the Context of Their Theological Thought*, vol. 6 (Brill Academic Publishers, 1997); Rudolf K. Markwald, *A Mystic's Passion: The Spirituality of Johannes Von Staupitz in His 1520 Lenten Sermons : Translation and Commentary* (P. Lang, 1990); D. C. Steinmetz, "Religious Ecstasy in Staupitz and the Young Luther," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 11, no. 1 (1980): 23–38; Franckforter and David Blamires, *The Book of the Perfect Life: Theologia Deutsch : Theologia Germanica* (AltaMira Press, 2003); H. A. Oberman, "Simul Gemitus Et Raptus: Luther and Mysticism," *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective* (n.d.): 219–251; S. Ozment, "Luther and the Late Middle Ages: The Formation of Reformation Thought," *Transition and Revolution: Problems and Issues in European Renaissance and Reformation History* (Minneapolis, Minn, 1974) 124 (1974); S. Ozment, "Eckhart and Luther: German Mysticism and Protestantism," *The Thomist* 42, no. 2 (1978): 259–280; Johannes Tauler, *Obras*, Serie B--Lecturas t. 3 (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1984); P. J. Malysz, "Luther and Dionysius: Beyond Mere Negations," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 4 (2008): 679–692; and Peter Sajda's "Tauler: A Teacher in Spiritual Dietethics: Kierkegaard's Reception of Johannes Tauler" in Jon Bartley Stewart, *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd, 2008).

<sup>102</sup> Bernard McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany (1300-1500)* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co, 2005), 401.

<sup>103</sup> Simão Rodrigues, *A Brief and Exact Account: The Recollections of Simão Rodrigues on the Origin and Progress of the Society of Jesus* (Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 45; Danzi, *La Biblioteca Del Cardinal Pietro*

In the late 1530's Ignatius chose three of his spiritual companions, the Castilian Nicolás de Bobadilla, the French Claude Jay and the Portuguese Alfonso Salmerón, to travel to Italy. There these three found supportive patrons in the circle surrounding Marguerite de Navarre's spiritual companions, Cardinal Reginald Pole, and his spiritual daughter, Vittoria Colonna.<sup>104</sup> Both of these royal *spirituali* supported Capuchin and Jesuits.<sup>105</sup> As a young churchman, Reginald "Pole drifted in the direction of a more mystical religion," after the death of his mother.<sup>106</sup> As a young widow, Colonna turned too to this mystical religion, specially as propagated through the French humanism of Lefevre D'Etapes and Marguerite of Navarre.<sup>107</sup> So perhaps the unidentified "Barth. Cordoni" who communicated with them via unfortunately lost letters is our Cordoni.<sup>108</sup>

Other connections relate Cordoni to less influential, and popular, movements. Adriano Prosperi traces the influence of Cordoni on the *Beneficio de Cristo*, the characterizing book of the early modern *spirituali* movement.<sup>109</sup> And both Paolo Simoncelli and Giorgio Caravale brings together their research on an Italian spirituality of "suspicious books in the vernacular" and Cordoni's "novum et insolitum orandum modum" linked with

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Bembo; Ugo Rozzo, *Biblioteche Italiane Del Cinquecento Tra Riforma e Controriforma*, Libri e Biblioteche 3 (Udine: Arti grafiche friulane, 1994). 17, 137, 157, 158.

<sup>104</sup> T. M McCoog, "Ignatius Loyola and Reginald Pole: A Reconsideration," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 47, no. 02 (1996): 257–273. William V Bangert, *Claude Jay and Alfonso Salmeron: Two Early Jesuits* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985). Thomas F Mayer, *Reginald Pole: Prince & Prophet* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 105ff.

<sup>105</sup> Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, 105, 122. As Fenlon shows, they found scholasticism to be "darke, intangled, difficult and beastlie." Dermot Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Italy; Cardinal Pole and the Counter Reformation* (Cambridge [Eng.]: University Press, 1972). 25. Abigail Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics of the Italian Reformation* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008), 101, 122.

<sup>106</sup> Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, 7. Pole, *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*. Vol.2

<sup>107</sup> Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics of the Italian Reformation*, 48, 95.

<sup>108</sup> Reginald Pole, *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2002).

<sup>109</sup> Adriano Prosperi, *L'eresia Del Libro Grande: Storia Di Giorgio Siculo E Della Sua Setta, Campi Del Sapere* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2000), 61, 241, 397. See also Eulogio Pacho, *Apogeo De La Mística Cristiana: Historia De La Espiritualidad Clásica Española, 1450-1650* (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2008), 208.

beghard and free spirit heresies.<sup>110</sup> Thus, we come closer to a full circle linking “late medievals” and early moderns.

Favre’s and Borgia’s introduction to mystical religion, occurs in relation to the same circle of Franciscans, Carthusian and humanists. In the early 1540’s someone charged with “Errori di Beghardi [a certain] padre Cabrino de la Compagnia de Jesu.” We do not know who this mysterious Fr. Jesuit Cabrino may be, but also in the early 1540’s Favre and the other Jesuit *spirituali*, under Francis Borgia’s patronage, did for Hispanic Catholics what de Navarre’s and D’Etaples’ “underground evangelical press” did for French evangelicals.<sup>111</sup> As collaborators, these future Jesuits edited and published many of the first editions of what today are classified as “mysticism,” a 16<sup>th</sup> century Hispanic and French coinage no one seems to have linked historically with the *spirituali* and with that other 16<sup>th</sup> century coinage “spirituality.”<sup>112</sup> As a faithful reader and collector of Franciscan spiritual writers, Duke Francis Borgia must have embraced Bartolomeo Cordoni when the Franciscan placed himself under his orders as second in command directly in contact with Charles V. Perhaps Borgia had a role in the publishing of the Catalan edition of his work, given that his mother, a Franciscan abbess, was one of the leading Spanish patrons of spiritual publishing.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, the Borgia family sponsored the publication of another condemned Franciscan text, the *Via Spiritus*,

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<sup>110</sup> As for Spain, Paolo Simoncelli extends the work of Campagnola showing that the Franciscan Spiritual Bartolomeo Cordoni paraphrased, at times plagiarized, the Mirror; at least in the Tuscan 1539 printed edition of the Dialogo dell’ unione spirituale di Dio con l’anima, based on a manuscript composed the same years Montserrat re-established strong contact with St. Giustina. Giorgio Caravale, *L’orazione Proibita: Censura Ecclesiastica E Letteratura Devozionale Nella Prima Età Moderna*, Biblioteca Della Rivista Di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa 17 (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 2003); P. Simoncelli, *Il “ Dialogo Dell’unione Spirituale Di Dio Con L’anima” Tra Alumbradismo Spagnolo e Prequietismo Italiano*, n.d, 95.

<sup>111</sup> S. Kocher, “Marguerite de Navarre’s Portrait of Marguerite Porete: A Renaissance Queen Constructs a Medieval Woman Mystic,” in *Medieval Feminist Forum*, vol. 26, 1998, 7. Margaret P. Hannay, *Silent but for the word: Tudor women as patrons, translators, and writers of religious works* (Kent State University Press, 1985).

<sup>112</sup> See n. 34 above.

<sup>113</sup> I Pedro M. Cátedra and Anastasio Rojo Vega, *Bibliotecas y lecturas de mujeres: siglo XVI* (Fundacion German Sanchez Ruiperez, 2004).

now edited by Carlés Amorós, who a few years earlier had published Cordoni's work.<sup>114</sup> Both texts "Franciscanize" mystical annihilative language, seemingly sharing a tradition with another favorite of Borgia, Friar Battista Crema, whom Elena Bonora places in the same spiritual currents as Bartolomeo Cordoni and other "early modern" Italian *reformati* orders.<sup>115</sup>

But what about the Spanish *Germanías*, German Catholic territories under Charles V? Should we include under *reformati* orders collaborations the Jesuit- Carthusian publishing enterprise, the one with which we opened and now conclude? Early modern Carthusians themselves would answer in the negative, for "Cartusia nunquam reformata quia nunquam deformata." And yet they shared the Franciscan-inspired reformation ideals that shaped the publishing enterprises sponsored by Cisneros and Borgia. We know that in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century the Carthusians at Cologne were led by Fr. Gerardus Kalckbrenner who, once elected as prior, initiated the printing of several vernacular "affective mystical" texts that would reinforce the pietistic needs of Catholics who found Lutheran teachings appealing.<sup>116</sup> In a letter to the prior, Favre writes: "Search. Reverend Father, search the city's nooks and crannies and you will find hidden treasures –treasures of sound teaching and piety."<sup>117</sup> Could these be books and/or pamphlets including mystical texts?

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<sup>114</sup> See F. Pons Fuster, "El Mecenazgo Cultural De Los Borja De Gandía: Erasmismo e Iluminismo," *Estudis: Revista De Historia Moderna*, no. 21 (1995): 23–44; Pons Fuster, *Místicos, Beatas Y Alumbrados*.

<sup>115</sup> Elena Bonora, *I Conflitti Della Controriforma: Santità E Obbedienza Nell'esperienza Religiosa Dei Primi Barnabiti* (Firenze: Le lettere, 1998), 259. See also the chapter "Spiritual trends in Pre-tridentine Italy," in Querciolo Mazzonis, *Spirituality, Gender, and the Self in Renaissance Italy: Angela Merici and the Company of St. Ursula (1474-1540)* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 137-76; P. Renee Baernstein, *A Convent Tale: A Century of Sisterhood in Spanish Milan*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2002); and N. L Brann, "Is Acedia Melancholy? A Re-examination of this Question in the Light of Fra Battista da Crema's Della cognitione et vittoria di se stesso (1531)," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 34, no. 2 (1979).

<sup>116</sup> Richard Bruce Marks, *The Medieval Manuscript Library of the Charterhouse of St. Barbara in Cologne*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 21-22 (Salzburg: Inst. f. Engl. Sprache u. Literatur, Univ. Salzburg : James Hogg, 1974), 57.

<sup>117</sup> Petrus Faber, *Spiritual Writings of Pierre Favre* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 345.

We cannot tell from the letter but we recall that the monks dedicated their first edition of Herp, 15<sup>th</sup> century Franciscan rector of the Brethren of the Common Life, to Ignatius of Loyola, by now rector of the fledgling Society of Jesus. Nevertheless, Ignatius did not express much enthusiasm about it. He wrote to Francis Borgia, warning that Herp must be “annotated in some places so that the reader would now what it [really] says.”<sup>118</sup> Around the same time, and less benignly, Bobadilla, warned ecclesiastical authorities that Reginald Pole welcomed a heretic in his house and offered him several heretical books to read.<sup>119</sup> Pole could have easily read those books while recovering from the intrigues and controversy raised by the English Protestants conflict with the same pope that gave Pole the cardinal’s hat. Among his favorite retreat places we find the Carthusian monastery at Cologne. In contrast to Ignatius and Bobadilla, Pole’s earliest collaborator, Favre, “who stole the [monks]’ heart,” helped make sure that the Carthusian Order establish brotherhood ties with Pole and the Jesuit order, in order to “communicate the rich treasure of their good works.”<sup>120</sup>

Perhaps the Carthusians should have dedicated their edition of Herp to Favre instead of Ignatius. His influence led the first Jesuits and others to publish Rhenish spirituality, including Favre’s choice for reading in his Germanic ministry circles, manuscript versions of the Spanish edition of Tauler’s *Instituciones*. So from the above we know that both Catholics and Lutherans cherished this book.<sup>121</sup> Popular among novices directed by Ignatius’ companion Jerónimo Nadal, its Carthusian printing was supervised by its editor, enormously

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<sup>118</sup> Hubert Wyrill, *Réforme Et Contre-Réforme En Savoie, 1536-1679: De Guillaume Farel À François De Sales* (Lyon: Réveil publications, 2001), 303.

<sup>119</sup> Mayer, *Reginald Pole*, 118.

<sup>120</sup> Santiago Cantera Montenegro, *Los Cartujos En La Religiosidad Y La Sociedad Españolas: 1390-1563*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 166 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 2000), 591.

<sup>121</sup> For the Lutheran reception see also Steven E. Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent: Religious Ideology and Social Protest in the Sixteenth Century* (Yale University Press, 1973).

influential Jesuit catechist and translator Peter Canisius.<sup>122</sup> As a child, Canisius made a pact with his friend, the future famous editor of mystical texts, Laurentius Surius, that if either of them joined the Carthusians, the other would follow.<sup>123</sup> Surius became a Carthusian, but Canisius claims that an Arnhem beguine prophesied that he would join a new religious order. So he enters the Jesuits in 1542 not only under Favre's guidance but also that of Justus Lanspergius, one of the leading figures of the *devotio moderna* and first publisher of Gertrude of Helfta.<sup>124</sup>

It is little known that with Borgia's support, several mystical currents were integrated into the first book edited and printed by a Jesuit, the above pseudo-Tauler's *Instituciones*, the Spanish basis of the Latin version.<sup>125</sup> While he and Favre were at the Carthusian monastery, the monks also published the Cologne Latin versions of Ruusbroec and Suso, the ones that became the basis for our modern editions.<sup>126</sup> In 1543 Canisius, like Cordoni before him, and his Jesuit spiritual director, Peter Favre, compiled under the name of Tauler and other writers, several mystical texts of mendicant and beguines, all of them books pertaining to "*Myfticae feu Affectivae*" theology, that is, "books that in this valley of tears are able to communicate the word of God into our souls."<sup>127</sup> If we take Tauler's *Institutions* as an example, we can note that half of the chapters have been identified in the Latin

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<sup>122</sup> Patrizio Foresta, *Ad Dei Gloriam Et Germaniae Utilitatem: San Pietro Canisio E Gli Inizi Della Compagnia Di Gesù Nei Territori Dell'impero Tedesco (1543-1555)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2006), 122.

<sup>123</sup> Canisio Pedro, *San Pedro Canisio: Autobiografía Y Otros Escritos* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2004).

<sup>124</sup> de Guibert, *Jesuits*, 15.

<sup>125</sup> Johannes Tauler, *Johannes Tauler, Sermons*, trans. Maria Shradly (Paulist Press, 1985), 2; Johannes Tauler, *Opera Omnia* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1985). There's a mistake in the English edition, the Jesuits founded in 1540 couldn't have banned Tauler in 1518 (!). They banned it beginning in the 1570's. The Capuchins did follow suit in 1590.

<sup>126</sup> Tauler, *Johannes Tauler, Sermons*; Tauler, *Opera Omnia*; Tauler, *Obras*; McGinn, *The Harvest of Mysticism in Medieval Germany (1300-1500)*.244. There's a mistake in the English edition, the Jesuits founded in 1540 couldn't have banned Tauler in 1518 (!). They banned it beginning in the 1570's. The Capuchins did follow suit in 1590.

<sup>127</sup> Certeau, 31. For the German humanist context see David J. Collins, *Reforming Saints: Saint's Lives and Their Authors in Germany, 1470-1530* (Oxford University Press, 2008). *Las Fuentes De Los Ejercicios Espirituales De San Ignacio. Actas Del Simposio Internacional* [Loyola, 15-19 Septiembre 1997], 324.

edition as written, in addition to Tauler, by St. Gertrude of Helfta, St. Hildegard of Bingen, Eckhart, Ruusbroec, and Suso. We recall that years earlier Marguerite de Navarre's patronage allowed D'Étaples to publish these texts in France. Canisius therefore takes up the same role as D'Étaples, except he does so within Charles V's territories. Canisius' commentaries to these mystical writers, together with those of Carthusian Surius and Jesuit Favre, were then added under Favre's pseudonym, Peter Noviomagus.<sup>128</sup> We should briefly add that the first translator in a romance language of Gertrude of Helfta, a Franciscan, was the same translator of Borgia's own works, discussed next chapter, and supported by Girolama Colonna of Aragon, niece of Vittoria Colonna.<sup>129</sup>

We do not know if Peter Noviomagus had a role in the publication of Bridget of Sweden's work, Esch was a spiritual director at the Flemish beguinage at Diest and Canisius' later spiritual father. Under the direction of Esch, Canisius delved deeper into the late medieval mysticism of the Low Countries.<sup>130</sup> Van Eymeren's Latin text is introduced by a vernacular text Esch wrote for Canisius' uncle, a humanist scholar.<sup>131</sup> Canisius strongly encouraged Jesuits to read beguine authors and others prohibited in the edict until a few years after its issue. Her books and those of Maria van Hout were highly popular among Jesuits from as far away as Spain and Italy. Following a suggestion by Amy Hollywood I have tried to identify still anonymous authors included in the Spanish *Instituciones*. While scholarship has restricted itself to patristic authors, I worked with the hypothesis that they are beguines. This led me to identify first a long passage as authored by Sister Katrei.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Guibert, *The Jesuits, Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, 200. Petrus Canisius, *I Fioretti Di Santa Ida Di Fischingen* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1996). *La Perle Évangélique: Traduction Française (1602). Édition Établie Et Précédée De Le Coup Terrible Du Néant*, Collection Atopia (Grenoble (France): J. Millon, 1997).

<sup>129</sup> Carvalho, Gertrudes De Helfta E Espanha, 49-51.

<sup>130</sup> Guibert, *The Jesuits, Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*, 200.

<sup>131</sup> *Perle*, 73.

<sup>132</sup> Tauler, *Obras*. 515.



Several extracts from the anonymous works we mentioned in the introduction, those included in the collection *Late Medieval Mysticism of the Low Countries*, can also be found there, including *The Evangelical Pearl* and *The Temple of our Soul*.<sup>133</sup> This supports Marcel Bataillon's hypothesis that the lost *Perla preciosa* prohibited by the Spanish Inquisition refers to a Spanish translation of the *Pearl* surviving in leaflets popular among lay spiritual groups.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, the publisher of the *Perla preciosa* published only one other book condemned by the Inquisition, none other than a collection under the pseudonym of the duke of Gandía Francis Borgia, yet another link to the first Jesuit community.<sup>135</sup> So if Canisius was behind the translation and anonymous publication of beguine inspired texts in the *Instituciones* and Esch was behind the translation of a text by Canisius' beguine aunt, then a translation of the *Mirror* in Latin, or even Catalan or Spanish, circulating among Jesuits would not be surprising.

When the duke Francis Borgia founded the first Jesuit community in his former duchy of Gandía, Favre performed the ceremony blessing the first stone. As a frequent visitor who constantly traveled between northern Europe and northern Spain, Favre encouraged the reading of the latter prohibited books in the new community, which we will see became the center of Jesuit mystical theology. Favre even introduced Borgia to friends of his who were Spiritual Franciscans.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Gérald Chaix, *Réforme Et Contre-Réforme Catholiques: Recherches Sur La Chartreuse De Cologne Au XVIe Siècle*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 80 (Salzburg, Austria: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1981), 311.

<sup>134</sup> Bataillon, *Erasmus Y España*, 810, n.12.

<sup>135</sup> Pedro M Cátedra, *Imprenta Y Lecturas En La Baeza Del Siglo XVI*, *Publicaciones Del SEMYR 2* (Salamanca: Seminario de Estudios Medievales y Renacentistas, 2001).

<sup>136</sup> These included Jewish converso Francisco Ortiz. Ortiz became notorious after he accused the Inquisition for apprehending beguine Francisca Hernandez, whom he defended after she cured him of carnal temptations and inspired him to engage in ministry with women. Borgia introduced Favre and Ortiz to the beguines associated with the monastery of St. Clare, where he ministered alongside his sister, a nun at the monastery. *Women in the Inquisition: Spain and the New World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 77.

But then, in a 1549 letter, Ignatius reprimands Borgia for his allowing Franciscans and other “personas rarissimas (most strange people)” to live in the residence for Jesuit students.<sup>137</sup> He complained that these Franciscans bring books of disputed origin; “not all of them genuine (“...no son todos así aucténticos).”” But even then, Ignatius did not realize that Jesuits themselves were “smuggling” texts by beguines and *spirituali*. Some of these were being enthusiastically welcomed by Jesuit *spirituali* at Gandía, some of whom identified Borgia as the angelic pope and Jesuits as the *virii spirituali* heralded by Joachimite writings.<sup>138</sup> Could one of their favored texts have been Cordoni, or even Porete herself? All we know is that Ignatius complained about their defense of a false doctrine of permanent union, something we saw as distinctive of Porete and beguine theology. In order to answer these questions we have now to discuss in depth the gender and sexuality factors that forged first Jesuit Ignatius of Loyola and his foundation of the Society of Jesus.

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<sup>137</sup> Letter Number 0686aF; Institute of Jesuit Sources, Polanco the Writings of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

<sup>138</sup> For a discussion see Alain Milhou, “La tentación Joaquinita en los principios de la Compañía de Jesús. El caso de Francisco de Borja y Andrés de Oviedo” in internazionale di studi gioachimiti Congresso, *Storia E Figure dell'Apocalisse Fra '500 E '600: Atti Del 4. Congresso Internazionale Di Studi Gioachimiti: San Giovanni in Fiore, 14-17 Settembre 1994* (Roma: Viella, 1996).

## Masculine Militarism and “Feminine” Tears in St. Ignatius of Loyola’s Mysticism

Juan Miguel Marín

This paper introduces the late medieval/early modern spiritual context that led Ignatius of Loyola (1492-1556) to compose the Society of Jesus’ foundational texts, the *Institute* and the *Spiritual Exercises*, and his own mystical texts, *Autobiography* and *Diary*. Contrasting these short but suggestive texts reveals a tension in Ignatius between Ignatius’ masculine ideal for Jesuits as “soldiers of God,” and his own affective mysticism, which will be after his death considered “feminine.” Ignatius attempts to enact an “apophysis,” or unsaying, of erotic desire leading to a mystical annihilation of the self, yet without enacting its prerequisite, a mystical “apophysis of gender.”



*Ignatius of Loyola calls forth a variety of images: founder of the controversial Society of Jesus, the “Jesuits,” the pope’s commandos in the Counter-Reformation; father of this advance guard of the Counter-Reformation who allegedly taught that the end justifies the means, the first “Black Pope,” the first general of the Society of Jesus, a man who claimed to owe obedience to no man on earth save the pope, and who taught his followers blind obedience to the pontiff. The very name “Jesuit” is for many synonymous with a casuist, a crafty person, an intriguer.*

--Harvey D Egan, *Ignatius Loyola the Mystic*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Harvey D Egan, *Ignatius Loyola the Mystic* (Wilmington, Del: M. Glazier, 1987).

## **Introduction**

In 1521, in the French kingdom of Navarre, a cannonball shattered the leg of a Spanish soldier from Loyola. Vain about his appearance and knightly status, he asked his doctors to re-break his leg so that he could continue to wear “the close-fitting boots currently in fashion.”<sup>2</sup>Bored while recuperating at his castle, the soldier requested “books of worldly fiction, commonly called chivalrous romances...to pass the time.”

But the castle’s library was not as accommodating as his surgeons; the soldier had to make do with a book of saints’ lives. Narrating his own *Pilgrim’s Testament*, a text best known as the *Autobiography*, St. Ignatius of Loyola locates his transformation from a worldly knight to a “knight of God” in the textual examples of St. Francis and St. Dominic.

Asking himself “What if I should do what St. Francis did, and what St. Dominic did?” Ignatius decided to follow on the footsteps of these two medieval friars, founders of religious orders, which, unlike monastic ones, instituted an “active” way of life instead of an exclusively contemplative one. Together with other “knights of God,” Ignatius founded the Society of Jesus, a Catholic men’s institute of “contemplatives in action,” whose members became known as the Jesuits.

In 1987, Jesuit Harvey Egan skillfully recognized the need to dispel the one-dimensional image of the founder of the Jesuit order as hyper-masculine soldier. In this he follows the canonical Joseph de Guibert’s *The Jesuits, Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice: A Historical Study* where he criticizes those who deny the adjective mystical to Ignatius.

“[If] in its loftiest meaning ‘military’ denotes service – voluntary and unselfish service in a cause noble among all others, that is, in the cause of one’s country ... then yes, we can say that Ignatian spirituality is a military spirituality.” Ignatius became a “genuine leader of men... a truly great commander in chief .... His mystical life was one of stressing service because of love, rather than

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<sup>2</sup> “yo le oi dezir, poder traer una bota muy justa y muy pulida, como en aquel tiempo se usaba.” Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Vida del P. Ignacio de Loyola fundador de la ... Compañia de Jesus* (por Alonso Gomez Impressor de su Magestad, 1583).

a mysticism of union and transformation.”<sup>3</sup>

Despite Guibert’s and Egan’s work, a tense atmosphere surrounds Ignatius’ masculinity, militarism and mysticism. Recent, more gender-aware, studies of Ignatian spirituality reiterate the assumption that Ignatius “departed from the mystical path that St. Francis had trodden in order to strike out into the terrain of politics and indoctrination and redeploy Catholicism to nonmystical ends.”<sup>4</sup> However, as historian Ulrike Wiethaus has noted, many medieval military archetypes, such as ‘the knight’ and ‘the crusader’ lived side-by-side with an often tearful “bridal mysticism, a particular type of devotion in which the human soul, embodied as feminine, aspires to a union experience with her bridegroom, the human Christ.”<sup>5</sup> Yet even while opposing the “hypermasculine” Jesuit stereotype, Egan himself refuses to associate Ignatius with the femininity and female practitioners of bridal mysticism.

Perhaps the reason lies in that doing so would *queer* Ignatian spirituality. Amy Hollywood’s “Queering the Beguines,” shows queers the spirituality of late medieval laywomen, uncovering homoerotic possibilities through a linguistic analysis of mystical texts by women who appropriated Christian bridal imagery to describe their relationship to God in gendered and sexualized terms.<sup>6</sup> These women were able to “challenge the prescriptive heterosexuality in which they lived” by subverting male-

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits, Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice: A Historical Study* (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1972), 174, 178.

<sup>4</sup> Ulrike Strasser, *State of virginity: gender, religion, and politics in an early modern Catholic state* (University of Michigan Press, 2004), 151.

<sup>5</sup> Ulrike Wiethaus, “Christian Piety and the Legacy of Medieval Masculinity” in Stephen Blake Boyd, W. Merle Longwood, and Mark W Muesse, *Redeeming men: religion and masculinities*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996). For the first example of beguine ‘tearful’ spirituality see Jean Miniac and de Vitry Jacques, *Vie de Marie d’Oignies*, Babel (Arles, France); 289. (Arles: ActesSud, 1997). See also C.D. Muir, “Bride or Bridegroom? Masculine Identity in Mystic Marriages,” *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages* (Religion and Culture in the Middle Ages series); also issued in paperback by University of Wales Press and University of Toronto Press, 2005 (2004): 58–78. For the wider historical context see Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200-1350)* (New York: Crossroad, 1998) and my “Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete’s *Mirror of Simple Souls*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 1 (2010): 89–109.

<sup>6</sup> Amy Hollywood “Queering the Beguines” in *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2007), 163.

female binaries through linguistic practices such as ascribing traditionally feminine attributes to Jesus.”<sup>7</sup> Hollywood has suggested it would be fruitful to subject mystical texts written by late medieval men to a similar queer analysis since, when undertaken by male authors, these allegorical readings often involve a transgression of gender norms, a textual transgenderism.<sup>8</sup> In this article I take up Hollywood’s suggestion and reconsider Ignatius the mystic as legate of both ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ traditions.<sup>9</sup>

I first introduce as framework the Spanish imperial and spiritual contexts that led Ignatius of Loyola to compose the Society of Jesus’ foundational texts, the *Institute* and the *Spiritual Exercises*, and his own mystical texts, *Autobiography* and *Diary*.<sup>10</sup> Subjecting these texts to linguistic analysis, reveals

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<sup>7</sup>Carolyn Walker Bynum initiates the study of such gendered practices in *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) and her classic *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987). For a feminist psychoanalytical view see Julia Kristeva’s preface to *Le grand Livre du Cantique de Cantiques* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999) and *Tales of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press 1987). For two studies of women’s contribution to mystical imagery see Bernard McGinn, “The Abyss of Love: The Language of Mystical Union among Medieval Women” in E. Rozanne Elder ed. *The Joy of Learning and the Love of God* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1995) and Mary Jeremy Finnegan, *The Women of Helfta: Scholars and Mystics* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991). For medieval views of the subversiveness of female spirituality see Nancy Caciola *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003) and Dyan Elliot *Proving woman: female spirituality and inquisitional culture in the later Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004). An extension into the early modern period can be found in Moshe Sluhovskiy *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>8</sup>Hollywood, 167.

<sup>9</sup>Egan, *Ignatius Loyola the Mystic*, 123.

<sup>10</sup>For this essay I have consulted all the known primary sources about Ignatius. Ignatius’ texts, in their original languages, can be found in the digital collection *Polanco: the Writings of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: The Works (opera), the Letters (epistolae)* (St. Louis, Mo: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996). I have also consulted the following biographies and biographical studies, beginning with the earliest: Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Vita Ignatii Loiolae, SocietatislesvFvndatoris, Libris QvinqueComprehensa. In QuibusInitialpsiusSocietatis, Ad Annum Usq. Domini 1556 Explicantur* (Neapoli: ApudIosephumCacchium, 1572); Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Vida del P. Ignacio de Loyola fundador de la ...Compañia de Jesus (por Alonso Gomez Impressor de su Magestad, 1583)*; H. Boehmer and H. Leube, *Ignatius von Loyola* (KF Koehler, 1941); José Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, *Ignatius of Loyola: the pilgrimsaint* (Loyola Press, 1994); John C. Olin, and Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *The autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola, with related documents* (Fordham Univ Press, 1974, 1992); Mary Purcell, *The firstJesuit, St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556)* (Loyola UniversityPress, 1981); J Cándido de Dalmases, *Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits: hislife and work* (Institute of JesuitSources in cooperationwithGujaratSahityaPrakash, Anand, India, 1985); Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Joseph N. Tylenda, *A pilgrim’sjourney: the autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola* (Ignatius Press, 2001); André Ravier, *La Compagnie De JésusSous Le Gouvernementd’Ignace De Loyola (1541-1556): D’après Les Chroniques De Juan-Alphonso De Polanco* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991); BraulioManzano Martín, *Iñigo de Loyola, peregrino en Jerusalén (1523-1524): según la “Autobiografía” del santo, los tratados de los franciscanos Medina y Aranda y lasmonografías de Fussly, Hagen, el marqués de Tarifa y de otros peregrinosespañoles y europeos* (Encuentro, 1995); Ignacio Cacho Nazábal, Ignacio de Loyola Instituto, and de Deusto Universidad, *Iñigo De Loyola: Ese Enigma*

that the transformative character of his spiritual, military leadership came from the collision of his medieval and early modern modes of thought. Ignatius' masculine ideal for Jesuits as "soldiers of God" did not coexist easily with his attraction towards a "tearful" mysticism that became gendered in the late sixteenth century as "feminine."<sup>11</sup>

I conclude that this tension almost resolves in Ignatius' mysticism when it becomes affective, erotic (16<sup>th</sup> c. Spanish *afecto* for Greek *Eros*, love, desire) and non-discursive, apophatic, (*sin discurso* for Greek *apophasis*, wordless, unsaying). Ignatius' affectivity leads him towards the late medieval tradition scholars call "affective Dionysianism," after the anonymous monk who coined the term "mystical theology."<sup>12</sup> Simultaneously, Ignatius' unresolved issues over masculinity lead him in the opposite direction, towards an early modern reinforcement of male/female polarities; even to the point of unsaying the embodied self without unsaying its assumed gender norms. Appropriating Michael Sells' *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, specially his discussion on affective Dionysianism, I will argue that Ignatius' mystical annihilation of the self enacts an "apophasis of desire," but stops short of enacting an "apophasis of gender."<sup>13</sup>

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(Bilbao: Mensajero, 2003); Peter Du Brul, *Ignatius: sharing the pilgrimstory : a reading of the Autobiography of St Ignatius of Loyola* (Gracewing Publishing, 2003); Juan-Alphonso de Polanco, *Year by Year with the Early Jesuits (1537-1556): Selections from the "Chronicon" of Juan De Polanco, S.J.*, Series I--Jesuit primary sources, in English translations no. 21 (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004); Manuel Ruiz Jurado, *El peregrino de la voluntad de Dios: biografía espiritual de San Ignacio de Loyola* (Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2005); Ignacio Cacho Nazábal, *Íñigo De Loyola, El Heterodoxo* (San Sebastián: Universidad de Deusto, 2006; José Martínez de Toda, *Los Años Riojanos De Íñigo De Loyola* (Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello : Sellos de Fuego Editores, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> See my "A Jesuit Mystic's Feminine Melancholia: Jean-Joseph Surin SJ (1600-1665)," *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* 1, no. 1 (2007) and "Heterosexual Melancholia and Mysticism in the Early Society of Jesus," *Theology and Sexuality* 13, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>12</sup> Boyd Taylor Coolman, "The Medieval Affective Dionysian Tradition," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 4 (2008): 615–632. Very useful as background for Ignatius' medieval, Hispanic and early modern context are Denys Turner, "Dionysius and some late Medieval mystical theologians of Northern Europe," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 4 (2008): 651–665; Luis Girón-Negrón, "Dionysian Thought in Sixteenth-Century Spanish Mystical Theology," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 4 (2008): 693–706; and Piotr Malysz, "Luther and Dionysius: Beyond Mere Negations," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 4 (2008): 679–692. All these essays also appear in Sarah Coakley and Charles Stang eds., *Re-Thinking Dionysius the Areopagite* (Chichester, U.K: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). See also Pseudo-Dionysius: *The Complete Works, The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

<sup>13</sup> I also echo Paul Collin's paper in this journal, "Constructing Masculinity: De Utero Patris (from the Womb of the

## **Masculine Militarism**

“...very little has been said about another dimension of the Jesuit success story, although this aspect seems no less crucial to our understanding of the phenomenon namely the Society's emotional appeal as an all-male organization and a homosocial fellowship of men who embodied a reimagined clerical masculinity that other men wanted to them emulate. Alongside the religious crisis, and inseparable from it, the century of the Reformation witnessed a crisis of gender norms coupled with a profound challenge to traditional clerical masculinity.”

Ulrike Strasser, “The First Form and Grace,” in *Masculinity in the Reformation Era*<sup>14</sup>

In his “*The First Form and Grace*: Ignatius of Loyola and the Reformation of Masculinity,” Ulrike Strasser raises important questions about what might have attracted men to Ignatius of Loyola’s novel organization at a time when Franciscan and Dominican religious orders possessed much *social capital*. He proposes to locate the answer in Ignatius’ charismatic masculinity. Unfortunately he takes an English translation of Ignatius’ memoirs as primary source. While Strasser and others have studied in depth Luis Gonçalves Da Cámara’s written recollections of Ignatius’ orally given *Pilgrim’s Testament*, or *Autobiography*, mining it for biographical details, they ignore that the late 16<sup>th</sup> century official biography by Pedro Rybadeneira demoted not only Ignatius’ *Autobiography* but also his mystical *Diary*, both remaining almost unknown until printed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, these studies neglect other

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Father) alluding to the Spanish Council of Toledo’s reference to *de utero Patris* and investigating “(re-)constructions of masculinity in relation to feminist reconceptualization of the Father–Son relationship in the classic formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity” See P.M. Collins, “Constructing Masculinity: De Utero Patris (from the Womb of the Father),” *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* 4, no. 2 (2010): 82.

<sup>14</sup> Ulrike Strasser, “The First Form and Grace: Ignatius of Loyola and the Reformation of Masculinity,” in *Masculinity in the Reformation Era* (Kirksville, Mo: Truman State University Press, 2008), 47.

<sup>15</sup> Divarkar, 2; O’Malley, *Constructing*, 12; Diccionario De Espiritualidad Ignaciana, Colección Manresa 37-38 (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2007), 593. Strasser owes much to the book-length study of the *Autobiography*, Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, *Loyola’s Acts: The Rhetoric of the Self*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Boyle points us towards the rhetorical aspect of Ignatius’ memoirs, considering them as literature rather than autobiography. She ignores the voluminous historical documentation corroborating the historical events mentioned in the texts. Strasser does too. He uses Olin’s edition, which mention the text did not appear in print until 1904. Olin, 3. Of the little studied *Diary*, the critical edition states: “Only two fascicles survive, the first written in forty days in 1544, and the second spanning a longer period, 1544-1545; the first part was published in 1892, but it was only in 1934 that the first full edition appeared: ed. A. Codina, *MonumentaHistoricaSocietatisJesu*, vol. 63 [= *MonumentaIgnatiana ex autographis vel ex antiquioribus exemplis collecta, Series Tertia, Sancti Ignatii de Loyola Constitutiones SocietatisJesu. Tomus primus, Monumenta Constitutionum Praevia*], Rome. “The reasons for this long period of hiding, when the hand-written notes were known only by indirect reference and preserved as a precious relic



biographical materials by Cámara and Ignatius' other companions.<sup>16</sup> In this section and the next I complement Strasser's essay by re-examining Ignatius' biographical materials in light of Ignatius' texts published in his lifetime, the *Formula of the Institute* and the *Spiritual Exercises*, and his still little known *Spiritual Diary*, Ignatius' only surviving autograph.

Strasser's insightfully describes Ignatius' charismatic masculinity by noting that once the young soldier Iñigo became Father Ignatius, he immediately distinguished the Jesuits from the other major active orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans. Ignatius decided to accept only men as "soldiers of God." For the "former" soldier, militarism became chief motif of Jesuit men's ministries at the service of God's imperial kingdom. Given that "definitions of masculinity are deeply enmeshed in the history of institutions and economic structures," the Ignatian *Formula of the Institute*, which defined the mission of the Jesuit institute, provides an example of how definitively masculine institutions function in the history of religions and empire.<sup>17</sup>

In our case, 1540, Imperial Spain, marks the year and context where Ignatius received papal approval to institute a new form of religious life based on a new ideal, or *hegemonic* masculinity. R. W. Connell, defines hegemonic masculinity as an ideal framework of behavioral patterns to which men are expected to conform, and which strives towards the subordination, not just of women, but also of men exhibiting any other behavioral patterns, that is 'feminine' ones.<sup>18</sup> Ignatius instates the first element of a soldierly masculinity as follows:

Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the cross in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and the Church, his spouse, under the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth, should keep in mind that once he has made a solemn vow of perpetual chastity he is a member of a community

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within a baroque, jewel-encrusted binding, well deserve investigation." I shall do so elsewhere.

<sup>16</sup> Luis Gonçalves Da Cámara, *Remembering Iñigo: glimpses of the life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: the Memoriale of Luis Gonçalves da Cámara* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, c2004).

<sup>17</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (University of California Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* See also R.W. Connell and J.W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 829–859.

founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine and for the propagation of the faith by the ministry of the word, by spiritual exercises and the works of charity, and especially by the education of children and unlettered persons in the institute of Christianity.<sup>19</sup>

Under Ignatius' leadership, the first Jesuits became the *Compañía* of Jesus, the historically specific term for a military unit best translated as "Jesus' platoon." The term's martial connotations reveal much of the Jesuit Order's Hispanic and early modern context. Its language of incorporation reflected the peak of Spain's Golden Age and the masculinity of a militant church (*militans ecclesia*).<sup>20</sup>

Not surprisingly, the *Formula* became part of Pope Paul III and Julius III's foundation bulls approving the Society of Jesus: *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae* (1540) and *Exposcit debitum* (1550). *Exposcit debitum* intensified the *Formula's* military language by adding to the above "defense and propagation of faith." By virtue of the bull, the Jesuits also adopted a distinctive fourth vow that gave the pope the role of military commander with the power to assign them any mission.

All members should bear in mind, not only when they first make their profession but as long as they live, that this entire Society and the individual members who make their profession in it are militating for God under faithful obedience to His Holiness Pope Paul III and his successors in the Roman pontificate. And however much he may be learned in the Gospel, and however we may be taught in the orthodox faith, let all Christians profess themselves under the Roman pontiff as leader, and vicar of *Jesus Christ*. And although we are taught by the Gospel, and we know from the orthodox faith, we firmly profess that all in Christ's empire are subject to the Roman pontiff as their leader and as the vicar of Jesus Christ, sake of greater devotion in obedience to the Apostolic See, of greater abnegation of our own wills, and of surer direction from the Holy Spirit, we have nevertheless judged it to be supremely profitable that each of us and any others who will make the same profession in the future should, in addition to that ordinary bond of the three vows, be bound by this special vow to carry out whatever the present and future Roman

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<sup>19</sup> "Quicumque in Societate nostra, quam Jesu nomine insigniri Cupimus, vult sub crucis vexillo Deo militare et soli Domino atque eius in terris vicario seruire, post solemne perpetue castitatis votum proponatsibi in animo, se partem esse communitatis ad hoc potissimum institutae, ut ad profectum animarum in vita et doctrinachristiana, et ad fidei propagationem per verbi ministerium, spiritualia exercitia et charitatis opera, et nominatim per puerorum ac rudium in christianismo institutionem." The official translation has Christianity for "christianismo institutionem." See *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 3.

<sup>20</sup> An anonymous satirical pamphlet published soon after the death of Pope Julius II (†1513) has the deceased churchman reach Heaven's pearly gates, only to be rejected by Saint Peter saying: "What monstrous new fashion is this, to wear the dress of a priest on top, while underneath it you are all bristling and clanking with blood-stained armour?" Quoted in David Sanderson Chambers' excellent *Popes, cardinals and war: the military church in Renaissance and early modern Europe* (I.B.Tauris, 2006).

pontiffs may order which pertains to the progress of souls and the propagation of the faith; and to go at once, without subterfuge or excuse, as far as in us lies, to whatsoever provinces they may choose to send us whether they decide to send us among the Turks or any other infidels, even those who live in the regions called the Indies, or among any heretics whatever, or schismatics, or any of the faithful. Therefore those who will come to us should, before they take this burden upon their shoulders, ponder long and seriously, as the Lord has counseled [Luke 14:30], whether they have enough grace for good deeds to mount this citadel their resources enough spiritual capital to complete this tower; that is, whether the Holy Spirit who moves them is offering them so much grace that with his aid they have hope of bearing the weight of this vocation. Then, after they have enlisted through the inspiration of the Lord in this militia of Christ, they ought to be prompt in fulfilling this vow which is so great, having thus girded up their loins.<sup>21</sup>

Implied here we find at least three crucial historical figures and events still fresh in the Spanish imperial mind that re-imagined them. We have Columbus' discovery of a path to the Indies, Luther's posting of schismatic theses at Wittenberg and Suleyman's siege of Christianity at the gates of Vienna. The Crusader's spirit of conquering the world for Christ remains strong in early modernity, but at the dawn of the colonial period, imperial warfare attains a peak, the imagined enemy of romance literature has struck too close to home. These three iconic "gendered" events mark the peak of Spain's Golden Age, and its subsequent decline. Yet previous scholars have typically examined these events without addressing gender and sexuality issues. For Ignatius the time has come for religious men to defend Christ's empire, take up the three traditional vows of poverty, obedience and chastity and thus gird up their loins for battle. For us the time has come to read *all* of Ignatius' texts through the lens of gender. And we can begin by noting that, in the first version of the *Formula of the Institute*, only one of the three traditional vows appears, chastity.

Ignatius instates the second element of a hegemonic masculinity when he insisted on their difference from the major religious orders, all of which welcomed female branches, saying "we are not monks!" Yet the original Ignatian community pursued the traditional monastic goal of overcoming

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<sup>21</sup> "Oliver J. Thatcher, *The Library of Original Sources: Volume V (9th to 16th Century)* (The Minerva Group, Inc., 2004), 180, with modifications. For a revised translation see *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 7.

disordered affections through vowing chastity. From Rybadeneira's biography we learn that the founder "believed that desiring a Jesuit woman's branch "although a pious and holy desire, it would be inconvenient and alien to the institute."<sup>22</sup> Thus Ignatius' community also replicated the social organization of a traditional male monastery, forming "an exclusively homosocial institution that defines itself through the exclusion of female presence and the rejection of all physical, emotional, and social relationships with women."<sup>23</sup> Let us explore these crucial elements, the idealization of chastity, the perils of homosociality, and the exclusion of women, in more depth.

W. W Meissner has devoted lengthy psychobiographical studies of Ignatius' accounts linking the Jesuit's spirituality of leadership in service and his problematic relationship with chastity, sexuality and women.<sup>24</sup> Yet Strasser has claimed that Ignatius, in the account of his life's unfolding vocation, creates for younger Jesuits an ideal manhood where "[s]truggles with sexual desire, so central to the Reformation campaign, are remarkably peripheral and relatively mild."<sup>25</sup> He also has claimed that "Ignatius substitutes concern for the suffering of others [especially everyday women] for his suffering for a lady," specifically the Virgin Mary.<sup>26</sup> Even if we restrict ourselves to the *Autobiography* we can only say that Ignatius *believed* the former. While the latter is false. As for the former, Strasser refers here to the episode where Ignatius remembers how he received the gift of chastity when

one night, still awake, he saw clearly an image of Our Lady with the holy Child Jesus. From this sight he received for a considerable time very great consolation, and he was left with such loathing for his whole past life and especially for carnal matters that it seemed to him that his spirit was rid of all the images that had been painted on it.... He never again had even the slightest complicity in matters of the flesh.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Vita Ignatii Loiolae, Societatis Iesv Fvndatoris, Libris Qvinqve Comprehensa. In Quibus Initia Ipsius Societatis, Ad Annum Usq. Domini 1556 Explicantur* (Neapoli: Apud Iosephum Cacchium, 1572).

<sup>23</sup> Wiethaus, *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> See his *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992) and *To the Greater Glory--: A Psychological Study of Ignatian Spirituality* (Milwaukee, Wis: Marquette University Press, 1999). See also Thomas Hollweck, *El Voto De Castidad En La Compañía De Jesús* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2001)

<sup>25</sup> Strasser, "First Form and Grace," 52.

<sup>26</sup> Strasser, *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> "Estando una noche despierto, vido claramente una imagen de nuestra Señora con el santo Niño Jesús, con cuya



Here we find the older Ignatius claiming to have annihilated in his youth all memories of his former carnal life. Yet elsewhere he admits to a young Jesuit how an image of the Virgin Mary reminded him of his desire for a married woman who cared for him during his convalescence.<sup>29</sup> He confesses he covered it in order to forget her.<sup>30</sup> Thus Strasser's interpretation claiming Ignatius portrayed himself to younger Jesuits as a successfully celibate male reinforces the hagiographical myth propagated by his disciples. They believed themselves to be following the example set here by former soldier, founder of the order, and future saint, Ignatius of Loyola when, as depicted in the first of the official biography's illustrations above, he left behind his sword at the feet of the Virgin patroness of a Hispanic monastery. In the next one angels carry a banner reading *donum castitatis*. They understood Ignatius as receiving there a divine *donum* (gift) enabling him to vow perpetual chastity, vanquishing his libido even in the

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vista por espacio notable recibió consolación muy excesiva, y quedó con tanto asco de toda la vida pasada; y especialmente de cosas de carne, que le parecía habérsele quitado del ánima todas las especies que antes tenía en ella pintadas...nunca más tuvo ni un mínimo consenso en cosas de carne." See also Ganss, 71. For other, more radical, examples of divinely-given chastity, see J. Murray, "Mystical castration: Some reflections on Peter Abelard, Hugh of Lincoln and sexual control," *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (1999): 73–91

<sup>28</sup> *Constructing a Saint Through Images: The 1609 Illustrated Biography of Ignatius of Loyola* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> Strasser, "First Form and Grace," 52.

<sup>30</sup> *Monumenta Ignatiana*, Altera ed. ex integro refecta, novo ordine disposita et aucta, Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu v. 2 (Romae: apud Monumenta historica Soc. Iesu, 1943).

midst of demonic temptations, through replacing affection for women, for affection to Mary, his new feudal lady. Ignatius may have left behind his sword. Yet he left behind neither his carnal longing nor his military life. It appears that Ignatius' forgetting of images did not fully succeed. Clearly, struggles remained. But how did Ignatius deal with them?

We can find an answer in those sources Strasser and others have neglected, such as Cámara's memoirs published as *Remembering Iñigo: glimpses of the life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*.<sup>31</sup> There, Cámara described Ignatius as someone who "in matters concerning chastity had a most perfect zeal," especially in relationships involving women but not excluding those involving men.<sup>32</sup> Since opportunities for homoerotic attachments were frequent in an exclusively male order Ignatius could be severe in his curtailing of even the possibility of this kind of attachment. Cámara recorded Ignatius's strict reaction to one potentially homoerotic incident:

One of the [Jesuit] brethren went into the lavatory, and he got ready and undressed himself with less care and more haste than was proper, when someone else, who was already inside, saw him like that, he gave him a spank on the buttocks. This happened before I arrived in Rome. Our Father Ignatius told me about it, and I clearly grasped from the way he told the story that it was nothing more than a prank, but he said that only because of this he had ordered him to be dismissed at once.<sup>33</sup>

As insignificant as we may find the event today, we have to understand that a masculine identity was being formed in these years. In order to establish an identity in which the masculine ideal was constituted not by heterosexual relationships but by being above carnal desires, homosexual attachments had to be forced out as a threat to this ideal.

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<sup>31</sup> Luis Goncalvez Da Cámara, *Remembering Iñigo: glimpses of the life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: the Memoriale of Luis Goncalvez da Camara*(St.Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, c2004).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 38. The following paragraphs revise those of my "Heterosexual Melancholia," 126.

<sup>33</sup> "Entro uhumirmaonas necessarias, e acertou de se aparelhar e descobrir com menos aduertencia e mays depressa do que conuinha; e quando o assyuiouotro que estaua dentro deu-lhe huma nalgada. Aconteceoisto antes que fosse a Roma: contou-monosso P. Ignacio; e, segundo claramente entendi do modo com que modizia, não foy mays que mera traesura; mas disse-me que so por isso o mandara logo despedir." Luís Gonçalves da Câmara "Memoriale" *Fontes Narrativi De S. Ignatio De Loyola Et De Societatislesulnitiis*, Monumenta Ignatiana (Romae: MonumentaHistorica Soc. Iesu, 1943), v. 1, 562. Translation from LuísGonçalves da Câmara, *Remembering Iñigo: Glimpses of the Life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: The Memoriale of Luis Gonçalves Da CâMara*, Series I--Jesuit primary sources, in English translations no. 19 (Leominster: Gracewing Pub, 2004), 37.

Two similar episodes involving Jesuits complexify our understanding of the gender issues involved a gestating Jesuit masculine ideal. In one of the incidents, a

... brother [who] was washing the feet of a sick man; he put his hand a little higher than was necessary. The sick man was a foreign Brother, whom he had not known or had any familiarity with previously, which might have given rise to some suspicion that the act was ill intentioned. Nevertheless, as soon as our Father heard of it, he ordered him to be expelled. The fathers came to him and begged him insistently to punish him in some other way, but not to expel him completely. The Father was not willing, but finally, after many requests, he granted them that he should be allowed to make a pilgrimage...<sup>34</sup>

Here we find another example of how the early Society struggled to define themselves as chaste celibate men. Ignatius here again attempts to expel resolutely the possibility of homoerotic desire to somewhere outside the community. Ignatius himself had written earlier of the need for compassion and patience when scandal arose. At this time, Ignatius' companions realized that Ignatius' focus on perfect chastity could compromise his own ideal of justice and mercy. Ignatius himself had written earlier of the need for compassion and patience when scandal arose. When he drafted the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* he insisted that in those cases "just as there should not be excessive readiness in admitting candidates, so should there be even less to dismiss them; instead one should proceed with much consideration and pondering in our Lord."<sup>35</sup> We should then ask, when did Ignatius insistence on his masculine ideal

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<sup>34</sup> "Depois da minha uinda de Roma aconteeo que, lauando este irmao hum dia os pies a hum enfermo, aleuantou a mammays arriba humpouco do que conuinha, o qual enfermo era humirmao estrangeyro, comquem elle nenhuma conuersaço ou familiaridad etivera, donde se podesses ospeitar que o que feznaziada lguma m'raiz. Todauva, como N. P. o soube, logo no mesmo ponto o mandou despedir. Os Padres se forao a elle, e commuita instancia lhapedirao que o castigassad'outramaneyra, e que o não lanpasse de todo. Recusaua o Padre; mas emfim, depois de muita instancia, lhes concedeo que fizesse huma peregrinaço" Gonçalves da Câmara "Memoriale" *Fontes Narrativi*, v. 1, 563. See also Gonçalves da Câmara, *Remembering Iñigo*, 38.

<sup>35</sup> *Constitutions*, 92. Jean Gerson, the most important theologian of the previous century, exerted an enormous influence on Ignatius and on later Jesuits, especially with regard to women and sexuality. Yet Gerson's mostly negative views concerning spiritual friendships between men and women, and between male religious, remains largely unexplored in the early modern Hispanic context. For the late medieval context see B.P. McGuire, "Jean Gerson and the End of Spiritual Friendship: Dilemmas of Conscience," *Friendship in Medieval Europe* (n.d.): 229–50; B.P. McGuire, "Late medieval care and control of women: Jean Gerson and his sisters," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 92, no. 1 (1997): 5–37. See also "Male Friendship, Sodomy, and Masculine Identity in Twelfth-century France." In *Gender and Difference in the Middle Ages*, edited by Carol Braun Pasternack and Sharon Farmer. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. Pp. 145-81. Reprinted in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*. University of Chicago Press, 2006. pp. 179-212.

justified, in his view, the dismissal of Jesuit candidates?

Ignatius often wished to make exceptions to his compassionate ideals in the face of threats against the Jesuit “body [which] ought to be kept clean, and for this purpose one ought to expel [candidates] readily.” He was tempted to do so in the case of

a very elderly father went to hear the confession of a woman in her house and succeeded in placing his companion in such a way that he could not be seen by the companion during the confession. Our Father [Ignatius] heard of this and although the priest concerned was one whose great virtue and age could not, morally or naturally, give grounds for any suspicion, he imposed a penance on him...<sup>36</sup>

A masculine chaste ideal formed Jesuit identity of the Society’s body not only through the exclusion of women but through the expulsion of anything that remotely reminded Ignatius of erotic desire. His ideal required the elevation of the Jesuit above carnal desires. Banishment for Ignatius did not arise out of homophobia but out of his attempt to maintain the semblance of homogeneity, in these cases homogeneity of desire. Ignatius’ masculine ideal became concerned with the gender of the Jesuit subject rather than with the gender of his object of desire. Preserving Jesuit subjects’ chaste uniformity takes precedence over other concerns. Ignatius worries about how erotic desire can be an obstacle in the pursuit of the Society’s goals. Homoerotic desire is especially dangerous because it could weaken the façade of masculinity that was increasingly harder to sustain. Ignatius thus worried about how affectivity can be an obstacle in the pursuit of the Society’s goals. And, even more often, Ignatius worried about how “Jesuit women” could be an obstacle in the pursuit of Jesuit goals.

In the 1540’s Ignatius exercises his authority against Jesuits who established relationships with semi-monastic beguines. Some Jesuits considered these laywomen, if not as fellow Jesuits, at least as fellow ministers. In a 1547 incident, Ignatius reprimanded a sympathetic superior:

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<sup>36</sup> “Hum Padre de muitaidedefoyouuir huma molher de confissao&sua casa, e acertou de ficar o companheiro de maneyra, que nãoestaua a suauista no tempo da confissao. Soube-o nosso Padre; e posto que o Padre era homem, de quem por sua grande uirtude e idade se nãopodianem moral nem naturalmente temer mal algum, todauialhedeu por issoem penitencia...”Gonçalves da Câmara “Memoriale” *FontesNarrativi*,v. 1, 564. See also Gonçalves da Câmara, *Remembering Iñigo*, 39.



The first is where you say in the 4<sup>th</sup> Constitution, “No one, male or female, is to be admitted to this group who has taken a [monastic] vow ...’ etc. Here you seem to allow for the female sex, though lower down you rightly said that women are not to be received under obedience by vow. On this please note that our Society does not and cannot admit women so as to take responsibility for them, except by way of advice and the other ministries that cannot be refused to anyone on grounds of social status or sex.<sup>37</sup>

Indeed by then the Society identified itself, canonically, as a male-only religious order. Still, Ignatius’ decided, against the advice of his companions, to request a special permission from the Pope that would allow him to exclude women.<sup>38</sup> Explaining Ignatius’ actions as instances of sexism does not suffice. As he mentions above, when it came to ministry, he believed in non-discriminatory service to those suffering because of their low economic class and gender. For example, in 1542-3 Ignatius establishes one of the first women’s ministries, the Saint Martha house for former prostitutes. Yet his welcoming women into the Jesuit ministerial sphere as objects of ministerial service did not extend to welcoming women as active ministerial agents.<sup>39 40</sup> His role models, Francis and Dominic, did. Given that he wished to imitate

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<sup>37</sup> “See also *Personal Writings: Reminiscences, Spiritual Diary, Select Letters Including the Text of The Spiritual Exercises*, Penguin classics (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 197.

<sup>38</sup> For a good, but unfortunately brief, discussion, see Gemma Simmonds, “Women Jesuits?” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 120-135.

<sup>39</sup> From the very beginning laywoman Isabel Roser became one of the first Jesuit’s companions, one of “Ignatius’ women.” As we know from his *Autobiography*, Roser should be considered one of Ignatius’ first companions, as much as any of the first Jesuits. Yet Ignatius did not allow her to become one of them. So she got the pope to write a brief allowing her to take the vows of the Society and order Ignatius to receive her. In December 1545, Ignatius did receive her vows and those of two other women, but the text of the vows carefully made no mention of entrance into the Society itself. This so-called women’s branch of the Society did not last. Roser had been a great friend and patron of Ignatius for many years, but after she took vows she made impossible demands, continued in her own ways, and demanded interminable hours of spiritual direction (more than all the rest of the Jesuits in the Roman Curia combined). In May 1546, Ignatius asked the pope to dispense the recalcitrant Roser from her vows. As a result of this failed experiment, Ignatius got a brief from Pope Paul III in 1547 forbidding the Society to take under its obedience communities of religious women. Then came Juana. She wanted, and got, for herself not a separate branch of the Society but membership in the Society itself.” See John Padberg “Secret, Perilous Project” <http://www.companymagazine.org/v171/secret.html> ; O. Hufton, “Altruism and Reciprocity: The Early Jesuits and Their Female Patrons,” *Renaissance Studies* 15, no. 3 (2001): 328–353. A. F. Marotti, “Alienating Catholics in Early Modern England: Recusant Women, Jesuits and Ideological Fantasies,” *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts* (1999): 1–34; E. Rhodes, “Join the Jesuits, See the World: Early Modern Women in Spain and the Society of Jesus,” *John W O’Malley, Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Steven J Harris and T Frank Kennedy (eds), The Jesuits, II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts* (2005): 1540–1773; and C. Valone, “Piety and Patronage: Women and the Early Jesuits,” *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance*, Ed. E. Ann Matter and John Coakley (1994): 157–84; Lance Gabriel Lazar, *Working in the Vineyard of the Lord: Jesuit Confraternities in Early Modern Italy* (University of Toronto Press, 2005).

them, why, with regards to gender, did he break with them?

Ignatius maintains one clear gendered idea, an early modern one, yet nevertheless based on his desire to do

what Saints [Francis and Dominic] practiced. He determined to do the same and even more. From these thoughts he derived all his consolation, not looking to any interior thing, nor knowing what humility was or charity or patience; or the discretion that regulates and measures these virtues. His whole intention was to do such great exterior works because the saints had done so for the glory of God, without considering any more particular prospect.”<sup>41</sup>

Ignatius genders the actor engaging in “exterior works,” that is, living the medieval *vita activa*, as a male human being. Ignatius furthers the transition towards modernity through his understanding of the *vita activa* as a *vita masculina*. Counter-Reformation scholars have explained a similar process when Roman Catholicism responded to Protestant “liberation” of women from the convent by excluding women from the life of action, restricting them to a life of contemplation within an “interior” monastic cloister. But we can see Ignatius remains medieval when we read the above in light of his extension of the *Formula* in the later *Constitutions*. There he lists admission impediments to the Society of Jesus. Against the wishes of his fellow Jesuits, Ignatius prohibits the admission of not only women but also of men who “in regards to the exterior, lack bodily integrity, [exhibit] illness, weakness or noticeable deformities... in order to further the salvation and extension not only of the body, that is, the Society’s exterior, but also its spirit.”<sup>42</sup> Here he echoes the Dominican scholastic, Thomas Aquinas, for whom women are “defective and misbegotten” males.<sup>43</sup> No homophobia or sexism here. Only the fear that unchastity and women

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<sup>40</sup> ; “Google Books Link,” accessed January 15, 2012, <http://books.google.com/books?id=L1leC3EfZQ4C>.

<sup>41</sup> “Y así, quando se acordaba de hacer alguna penitencia que hicieron los Santos, proponía de hacer la misma y aún más. Y en estos pensamientos tenía toda su consolación, no mirando a cosa ninguna interior, ni sabiendo qué cosa era humildad, ni caridad, ni paciencia, ni discreción para reglar ni medir estas virtudes, sino toda su intención era hacer destas obras grandes exteriores, porque así las habían hecho los Santos para gloria de Dios, sin mirar otra ninguna más particular circunstancia.” See also Ganss, 74.

<sup>42</sup> Quanto a lo exterior, falta de integridad corporal. Enfermedades y flaqueza o fealdades notables Para la conseruación y aumento no solamente del cuerpo, id est lo, exterior de la Compañía, pero aun del espíritu della.”

<sup>43</sup> This idea comes from Aristotle, though St. Thomas Aquinas, primary Scholastic authority for Jesuits of Gagliardi’s time, mitigates the “Philosopher”’s thought. While Aquinas accepts the scientific thought of his time, according to which women’s nature, biologically speaking, are considered deformed males. Nevertheless, as he replies to his

would *deform* the new Jesuit religious order at a time when Ignatius believed medieval orders needed *reform*. At a time when clerics did not keep vows of chastity, many of them living in sinful companionship with women, Ignatius' hegemonic masculine requirements for a pure, chaste, male, Jesuit body, will lead him to simultaneously subordinate lustful men as "effeminate" men and exclude women from Jesuit active ministry. And yet, Ignatius' masculine ideal will clash with a "feminine" affective spirituality embedded in his mystical texts, texts which clash with Ignatius' identification of Jesuit men with the *Formula's* call for men willing to become ministers of the *Word*.

### ***"Feminine" Tears***

*The Word itself had to be born in the void that awaited it. That had been the theology of the Rhenish in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It survived still in the works of [16<sup>th</sup> century Carmelite friar] John of the Cross, an intellectual who remained very scholastic. But already in his works, or in those of [his companion nun, Mother] Teresa of Avila (more modern than he), and after [them], the approach took physical forms, more concerned with a symbolic capacity of the body than with an incarnation of the Verb. It was an approach that caressed, wounded, ascended the scale of perceptions, attained the ultimate point, which it transcended. It 'spoke' less and less. It was written in unreadable messages on the body transformed into an emblem or a memorial engraved with the suffering of love. The spoken word [parole] remained outside of this body, written but indecipherable, for which an erotic discourse would henceforth be in search of words [mots] ....*

*No doubt it is true that, for reasons that need clarifying, the woman's experience held up*

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critics, in regard to human nature, women are fully human, God formed *both* male and female. As he writes, "Article 1. Whether the woman should have been made in the first production of things? ... Objection 1. It would seem that the woman should not have been made in the first production of things. For the Philosopher says (De Gener. ii, 3), that "the female is a misbegotten male." But nothing misbegotten or defective should have been in the first production of things. Therefore woman should not have been made at that first production...

Reply to Objection 1. "As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence; such as that of a south wind, which is moist, as the Philosopher observes (De Gener. Animal. iv, 2). On the other hand, as regards human nature in general, woman is not misbegotten, but is included in nature's intention as directed to the work of generation. Now the general intention of nature depends on God, Who is the universal Author of nature. Therefore, in producing nature, God formed not only the male but also the female." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 92, a. 1, Obj. 1. For the entire question see <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1092.htm>. For the controversies surrounding "the concept of woman," and the dialogue between late medieval women mystics, including Porete, and male religious, including Aquinas, see Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250-1500* (W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2002), 27-180, 321-438. For the transition to the Renaissance and Reformation centuries see its section "Women's Contributions to the Reform of the Concept of Woman," 1065-70.

*better against the cluttered ruins of symbolic systems, which were theological and masculine, and which thought of presence as the coming of a Logos. But precisely the presence to which these Mothers and Ladies bore witness disengaged itself from the Word."*

*Michel de Certeau SJ – The Mystic Fable*<sup>44</sup>

It is at the beginning of "the book that changed the world (Boehmer)," where Ignatius for the first time uses the term translatable as "affections" or "affectivity," *afecto*.<sup>45</sup> Despite its historical significance, Michel de Certeau barely mentions Ignatius' classic, the *Spiritual Exercises*, composed in short bursts from 1522 until Paul III approves them in 1548, in his own classic on early modern mysticism, *The Mystic Fable*. Perhaps Certeau barely mentions the text because it barely echoes the affective discourse often associated with medieval women's transformation of an affective Dionysianism based on an original "mystical" or secret theology hidden beyond the world and the Word. As Ignatius himself knew, laywomen known as beguines excelled at such mysticism, expressing it not only in joyful poems but even funereal laments. He encountered many of them as "intercessors for their community in times of warfare, plagues, and other social ills..." since it was believed "beguines' mourning had special potency because it was inspired by compassion, punctuated by tears and moans."<sup>46</sup> Ignatius also knew that his 16<sup>th</sup> century contemporary, humanist and reformer Desiderius Erasmus read in Greek, "in the beginning was the *logos* (Word)," the first verse of John's gospel, and then "translated *logos* as *sermo* (speech or discourse); [he] would have preferred to translate *logos* as *oratio* but was too fastidious to designate the Son with a feminine word."<sup>47</sup> Erasmus and other Renaissance humanists inherited a medieval mystical theology where God as agape, the brotherly love of the Christian gospel, would become *eros*, the source of intense loving desire for a divine other. Unlike many affective

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<sup>44</sup> Certeau, *Fable*, 6.

<sup>45</sup> H. Boehmer, *Ignatius von Loyola* (KF Koehler, 1941).

<sup>46</sup> Strasser, *State of virginity*, 76 and Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 80. See also my "Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*," *Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 1 (2010): 89–109.

<sup>47</sup> Boyle, *Loyola's Acts*; xi.

Dionysians, such the Rhenish mystics or Ignatius' contemporaries, the Carmelite bridal mystics John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, Ignatius' *Exercises* do not seem, at first, to favor a *via amatoria*, an amatory "way of love" welcoming an embodied nuptial language, or a *via negativa*, an apophatic, discourse-less "way of negation" seeking words transcending the limitations of body and language.

Or, perhaps Certeau barely mentions the *Exercises* because the book's militaristic language reflects much of his early modern imperial context. But if we study what led Ignatius to compose this classic text, which Ignatius introduces and concludes as an exploration of desire, we will realize that, even more than his supposedly more mystical Carmelite contemporaries it was Ignatius whose approach spoke less and less, written in unreadable messages on his body and his texts. In this section and the next we will see that women remained a constant presence in Ignatius' life, a "feminine" presence revealing that beneath the masculine, military discourse of his *Exercises* lies a nondiscursive foundation that exposes them as an erotic discourse in search of words and images. Ignatius will claim his path involves a movement leaving behind "inordinate desires," in his specific case, leaving behind his former promiscuous life's strong desires for women. He claims God replaced them with divinely ordered desires for Christ, the new feudal lord the former soldier will now serve. Indeed, Ignatius' soldier's life, and his very human desires, kept trailing after him.

Ignatius introduced the *Exercises*' "First Annotation," with *afectos*, seemingly assuming the existence of both disordered ones that must be rejected and positive ones that must be intensified. Even then the introduction appears to reflect institutional masculinity of the Jesuits by treating contemplation as a form of affective warfare:

By the term spiritual exercises we mean every way of examining one's conscience, of meditating, of contemplating, of praying vocally and mentally, and of performing other spiritual actions, as will be said later. For as strolling, walking and running are bodily exercises, so every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all the disordered affections, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the Divine Will as to the management of one's life for the

salvation of the soul, is called a spiritual exercise.<sup>48</sup>

Following the *Formula's* perspective, Ignatius approached medieval monastic exercises as if they were military practices, those physical exercises that readied combatants for battle, thus placing himself closer to a tradition restricted to males.<sup>49</sup> Elsewhere he writes a letter to Jesuits, reminding them of their being soldiers “with a special rank” and comparing Jesuit exercises with those of athletes running a race, a motif going back to the first Christian century. Above the *Exercises'* goal seems to be minimizing, and even eliminating desire for creatures through readying for, and engaging in, spiritual combat. The *Formula's* soldiers must exercise to strengthen their bodies to repel the enemy, disordered desire, which later in the *Exercises* “becomes womanly, in being weak against vigor yet increasingly strong. Just as a woman, when she is quarrelling with some man, loses heart and takes flight...”<sup>50</sup> But in a restatement of the *Exercises'* goal, this time near the text's end, Ignatius writes that the exercitant should dispel *all* “womanly” affects through intensifying them with much affection, “afectándose mucho.” I suggest that we will be able to understand Ignatius' gendered paradox, best expressed in his First Week's “Principle and Foundation,” by approaching such an affective dispelling as an actualization of what Michael Sells calls an affective, wordless, *apophasis of desire*.

Sells identifies the apophatic overcoming of intellectual limits through the intensity of desire as a theme characteristic of medieval beguine mystics.<sup>51</sup> However, Ignatius, purportedly the Counter-Reformation's champion of orthodoxy, also taught similar beliefs. For Sells,

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<sup>48</sup> “La primera anotación es, que por este nombre, ejercicios espirituales, se entiende todo modo de examinar la consciencia, de meditar, de contemplar, de orar vocal y mental, y de otras espirituales operaciones, según que adelante se dirá. Porque así como el pasear, caminar y correr son ejercicios corporales; por la mesma manera, todo modo de preparar y disponer el ánima para quitar de sí todas las affectiones desordenadas y, después de quitadas, para buscar y hallar la voluntad diuina en la disposición de su vida para la salud del ánima, se llaman ejercicios espirituales.” See also Ganss, 121.

<sup>49</sup> See Kuefler “Soldiers of Christ: Christianity Masculinity and Militarism in Late Antiquity” in BjörnKronendorfer, *Men and masculinities in Christianity and Judaism : a critical reader* (London: SCM Press, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> “El enemigo se haze como muger en ser flaco por fuerza y fuerte de grado. Porque así como es proprio de la muger, quando riñe con algún varón, perder ánimo, dando huy[da].” See also Ganss, 124.

<sup>51</sup> Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayng*, 125. See also my Marin, “Annihilation.”

[In] apophasis of desire [what] might seem an unexceptional doctrine of salvation through faith rather than works is pushed to the extreme: the soul that gives up all will and works is no longer concerned with poverty or riches, honor or dishonor, heaven or hell, with self, other, or deity. Such a state of utter selflessness, of annihilation of the will and reason –both of which are concerned with works—cannot be achieved through works or efforts. It occurs when the soul is taken up or ravished (ravine, rapto, ravissee) by its divine lover.”<sup>52</sup>

Now compare to Ignatius’ *Principle and Foundation*, where we find the first of the elements in Sells’ triad of indifference, annihilation and rapture.

...it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to our free will and is not forbidden. Consequently, on our own part we ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one, and so on in all other matters, only desiring and choosing that which leads us to that end for which we were created.”<sup>53</sup>

This passage has often been considered inaccurately as the distinctive doctrine of Ignatian *indiferencia* and emphasized as necessary given its initial appearance as “Principle and Foundation.” The issue here lies not in originality of sources but in dispelling the too restrictive image of Ignatius as the Machiavellian soldier of God and replacing it with a more transgressive image of an apophatic mystic attempting the impossible, annihilation of the human self and its desires (affectos) through an affective intensification of Desire (*Eros*). As ignition for spiritual exercises, Ignatius required the self to become “indifferent,” welcoming whatever fate God ordains, by annihilating its worldly attachments so as to cleave to God and nothing but God. In order to do so, Ignatius’ Exercises will initiate an annihilation of the self, through the deformation and reformation of the soul and its faculties, the medieval tripartite mind consisting of memory, will and understanding, leading to “bridal” rapture and mystical union with God of a

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<sup>52</sup>Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 118.

<sup>53</sup> “Principio y fundamento. El hombre es criado para alabar, hazer reuerencia y seruir a Dios nuestro Señor y, mediante esto, salvar su ánima; y las otras cosas sobre la haz de la tierra son criadas para el hombre, y para que le ayuden en la prosecución del fin para que es criado. De donde se sigue, que el hombre tanto a de vsardellas, quanto le ayudan para su fin, y tanto deue quitarse dellas, quanto para ello le impiden. Por lo qual es menester hazernos indiferentes a todas las cosas criadas, en todo lo que es concedido a la libertad de nuestro libre albedrío, y no le está prohibido; en tal manera, que no queramos de nuestra parte más salud que enfermedad, riqueza que pobreza, honor que dessoron, vida larga que corta, y por consiguiente en todo lo demás; solamente deseando y eligiendo lo que más nos conduce para el fin que somos criados.” See also Ganss, 130.

traditionally “female” soul embodied as feminine that, nevertheless, somehow remains “male.”

At the text’s beginning, memory recalls affections to creatures, intensifying desire, so as to make an affective act (*afectando*) arise in the domain of will (*voluntad*) together with a discursive act (*discurriendo*) in the domain of reason (*entendimiento*).<sup>54</sup> But at the text’s conclusion, in a final “Contemplation to Attain Love” the exercitant must

“[b]ring to memory all gifts received from creation, redemption, and any particular gift, considering, with intense affection, how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much, of what he has, he has given me; then consider that the Lord wants to give himself to me, as much as he can, according to the divine order. Then self-reflect, considering with reason and justice, what I should offer and give in return, that is, all my possessions, and myself along with them, as someone who offers with intense affectivity: ‘Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my reason and all my will; all that I have and all that I possess. All this you have given me, Lord, and I return them to You. Everything is yours. Dispense them according to your will. Give me your love and grace, that’s more than enough.’”<sup>55</sup>

One could ask if Ignatius requires the soul to get rid of its human will in order to find the divine Will. Yet, since even here one is supposed to meditate with the three medieval faculties of the mind, it seems that is not necessarily the case, at least here. The first act, to bring to memory all gifts received from creatures, exemplifies one of the best known aspects of the *Exercises*, what makes it a peak of cataphatic, i.e. discursive spirituality. Ignatius’ calls his highly imaginative method a “composition of place,” one to be done by bringing to memory (*traer a la memoria*) that which will be the object of meditation and intensify its vividness through an application of the five bodily foundations of the three spiritual faculties, namely, a composition (*composicion*) of a spiritual space through application

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<sup>54</sup> “Como en todos los ejercicios siguientes espirituales husamos de los actos del entendimiento discurriendo y de los de la voluntad afectando.” See also Ganss, *Ibid*.

<sup>55</sup> “El primer punto es traer a la memoria los beneficios rescibidos de creati3n, redempti3n y dones particulares; ponderando con mucho afecto qu3nto ha hecho Dios nuestro Se3or por my, y qu3nto me ha dado de lo que tiene, y consequenter el mismo Se3or desea d3rseme en quanto puede, seg3n su ordenaci3n diuina. Y con esto reflectir en m3 mismo, considerando con mucha raz3n y iusticia lo que yo deuo de my parte offrescer y dar a la su diuinamaiestad, es a saber, todas mis cosas y a my mismo con ellas, as3 como quien offresce affect3ndose mucho: tomad, Se3or, y recibid toda mi libertad, my memoria, my entendimiento, y toda my voluntad, todo my auer y my poseer; Vos me lo distes, a Vos, Se3or, lo torno; todo es vuestro, disponed a toda vuestra voluntad; dadme vuestro amor y gracia, que 3sta me basta.” See also Ganss, 176.



(aplicacion) of the five senses.”

An Ignatian exercise makes more vivid the imagined/remembered gospel narrative, whether it is Jesus’ birth in the manger or his passion in Jerusalem, by magnifying memory through sensorial modes. Visuality initiates the composition of place, with the other sensorial modes appearing successively. “With the sight of my imagination I will see the persons,” so we are not yet in an apophatic, imageless state, much less in a wordless one, since we are supposed to engage “colloquies” with the holy personages, requiring of course, an aural modality: “By my hearing I will listen to what they are saying or might be saying; and then, reflecting on myself, I will draw profit from this.” We end with taste and touch “the infinite sweetness and softness of the Divinity, of the soul, of its virtues, and of everything, appropriately for each of the persons, then reflecting on oneself.”<sup>56</sup> This leads to immersion in the gospels’ narrative and identify themselves with the human and divine persons in a sensorial, affective, way, reflecting the encountered other or Other. Since as in every meditation like the above, the exercitant is supposed “to ask for what I desire,” we should link this initiation as an ignition of desire, which Ignatius, as a student of humanism, understood as Eros, erotic desire for God.

Interaction with the characters of the gospel narrative goes beyond passivity since “appropriately for each of the persons who is contemplated” the exercitant is asked to apply the senses in order to place himself or herself among them in an interactive, affective, way through colloquial conversation even as far as to “speak, embrace and kiss the places these persons walk or sit ...”<sup>57</sup> Sensuous cataphaticism will then characterize one aspect of affective mysticism when the transition between cataphaticism and apophaticism occurs precisely by such affectivity involving both the sensory the sensual, Spanish *sensualidad*. And as a man of his time, he will associate such sensuality with women.

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<sup>56</sup> “...oler y gustar con el olfato y con el gusto la infinita suavidad y dulçura de la diuinidad, del ánima y de sus virtudes y de todo, según fuere la persona que se contempla; refletiendo en sí mismo.” See also Ganns, 151.

<sup>57</sup> “El quarto, tocar con el tacto, así como abraçar y besar los lugares, donde las tales personas pisan y se asientan...” See also Ganns, 151.

Ignatius' recollections of the many beguines he met can illuminate introduce some of the paradoxical issues underlying his affective spirituality and his relation to women. What Hollywood says of Meister Eckhart, paradigmatic apophatic mystic and minister to beguines, applies too to Ignatius: his "gender imagery is worthy of note even without reference to the role of women in his ministry and as influences of his thought, but attention to the latter makes the imagery more striking and helps explain it."<sup>58</sup> In one instance he remembers two of them, mother and daughter. "They pestered me with their desire of going about from place to place to assist the poor they found in the different hospitals. I, however, disapproved of their design, on account of the daughter, who was quite young and beautiful." In that instance, and many others, Ignatius rejects women aspiring to active ministry.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, he often welcomed deep ministerial relationships with other women who sought him. One of them, young nun Teresa Rejadell, becomes relevant for us; she sought Ignatius for advice on how to deal with the suffering caused while praying with the *Exercises'* discursive method, and with her "evil, erotic or sensual, thoughts."<sup>60</sup>

Ignatius not only admits to Rejadell that he himself and even Saint Paul struggled with sensual temptation he also confesses that there are ecstatic moments when

"it sometimes happens that the Lord opens our soul, moving and forcing it to do something or other, by speaking inside it without the din of words. The soul is thus irresistibly elevated in its totality towards divine love, and we ourselves towards feeling it. Even if we wanted to we would not be to resist."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Amy M Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1995).

<sup>59</sup> Ulrike Strasser briefly discusses the relationship between women and Ignatius ministry in " 'The First Form and Grace,' 61-66 and between later Jesuits and "Jesuitesses" in *State of virginity*, 150ff. See also Gemma Simmonds, "Women Jesuits?" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 120-135.

<sup>60</sup> "cogitaciones malas, torpes o sensuales." There are two English translations. See *St. Ignatius Loyola: Letters to Women* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2007) and *Personal Writings: Reminiscences, Spiritual Diary, Select Letters Including the Text of The Spiritual Exercises* (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 136-7.

<sup>61</sup> "Acaẽçe que muchas veces el Señor nuestro mueue y fuerza á nuestra ánima á una operaziõn ó á otra abriendo nuestra ánima; es á saber, hablando dentro della sin ruido alguno de voces, alzando toda á su diuino amor, y nosotros á su sentido, aunque quisiésemos, no pudiendo resistir." Ignatius' companion Jeronimo Nadal adds elsewhere that "Ignatius "during prayer found that tears show up, and there is like the beginning of an ecstasy,

Here Ignatius shares with Rejadell what we only will find below in his intimate *Diary*, the Ignatian text that comes closer to the affective spirituality Ignatius encountered in his youth. It is there where we find him writing: “I felt like moving towards or being drawn towards the Father, my hair stood on its end, and I noticed an ardent rush in all my body followed by tears and the most intense devotion.”<sup>62</sup> In those moments of irresistible desire God can enrapture souls, speaking to them without the “din of words.” The last phrase gives us a clue illuminating Ignatius’ gendered attitudes towards sensualidad, desire and apophysis.

The phrase, “din of words,” appears in a discussion on *sensualidad* by Ignatius’ contemporary mystic, friar Francisco Osuna. In 1523, Osuna joined a community founded by a Franciscan who claimed “he had learned more from the tears of a loving woman than from all his years of study at the biggest universities of Europe.”<sup>63</sup> Despite its leaning towards anti-intellectualism, Osuna’s teachings on “affective Dionysianism,” permeated the humanist university of Alcalá when Ignatius attended as a student. Osuna’s 1527 *Third Spiritual Alphabet*, the most important prayer book in Counter-Reformation Spain until the publication mid-century of Ignatius’ *Exercises*, insisted that sensoriality/sensualidad must be left behind.

Our wife is sensuality, which reason should in no way heed or understand. That Abraham was directed to listen to the voice of Sarah does not contradict this teaching, for Scripture assures us that that occurred after female things ceased. These functions cease in us when sensuality is subject to reason, and when reasonable it tells us to get rid of the slave and her son, removing the imagination and the distractions born within her so that we remain alone without the din of words.<sup>64</sup>

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which our Father Ignatius almost always had.... This is *raptus* or ecstasy of the mind, which makes everything clear in such a way, that afterwards, there is no way or words that can speak about it.”

<sup>62</sup> “sentí en mí vn yr o lleuar me delante del Padre, y en este andar vnlebantárseme los cabellos, y moción como ardor notabilíssimo en todo el cuerpo, y conseqüente a esto lágrimas y deuociónintensíssima”

<sup>63</sup> See the discussion of Osuna by Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 104.

<sup>64</sup> “Nuestra mujer es nuestra sensualidad, a la cual en ninguna manera debe oír la ni entender la razón; y no contradice a esto ser mandado a Abrahán que oiga la voz de Sara; porque aquello fue después que cesaron en ella, según dice la Escritura, las cosas de mujeres (Gen 21,7); que entonces cesan en nuestra sensualidad cuando está

Osuna explains away the biblical passage where the patriarch Abraham listens to his wife Sarah as an exception, given that Sarah had ceased to menstruate. Osuna is not misogynist here. He is concerned not with women, but with pollution which could include menstrual blood and ejaculated semen, both originating in human blood and both signs of lust, which nevertheless were considered female at the time.<sup>65</sup> Here they serve as allegories of what is to be rejected, not sensuality but sensoriality since it arises from the “corporeal senses,” which we must cast out along with the “imagination and its distractions.”<sup>66</sup> We know he is not rejecting what we could call sensuality in its contemporary acceptation because his examples of sensual rapture, tearful ecstasy, and other states vulnerable to accusations of madness and demonic possession, are all male.

He offers as examples the same two male saints Ignatius takes as his Jesuit masculine ideals.

Osuna claims:

...we know for a fact that when St. Dominic and St. Francis and many of their companions experienced things they could not conceal, they uttered sounds and cries and acted in unusual ways...

If you were to read in some book that you must not associate with people who experience rapture, as if they were raving mad, you should not believe that either...

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bien sujeta a la razón; y lo que dice cuando está puesta en razón, es que echemos fuera la esclava y su hijo, desechando la imaginación y el distraimiento que de ella nace para que así nos quedemos solos sin ruido de voces” Francisco de Osuna, *Tercer Abecedario Espiritual: Estudio Histórico y Edición Crítica*, Biblioteca de autores cristianos (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1972), 184. See also Francisco de Osuna, *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 104.

<sup>65</sup> Osuna here follows Aristotle. For the Aristotelian gender issues see Murat Aydemir, *Images of bliss: ejaculation, masculinity, meaning* (U of Minnesota Press, 2007), 10. He and the first Jesuits were caught in the controversy over Francisco Ortiz, a Franciscan colleague who defended a *beata* arrested by the Inquisition. He claimed he cured her of *fluxussemi*. See n.62 below the context of Mary E. Giles “Francisca Hernandez and the Sexuality of Dissent,” in *Women in the Inquisition: Spain and the New World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 80ff. For the wider historical context see Stephen Haliczer, *Sexuality in the Confessional: A Sacrament Profaned* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) and *Between Exaltation and Infamy: Female Mystics in the Golden Age of Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also C. Leyser, “Masculinity in Flux: Nocturnal Emission and the Limits of Celibacy in the Early Middle Ages,” and R.N. Swanson, “Angels incarnate: Clergy and masculinity from Gregorian reform to Reformation,” in Dawn M. Hadley, ed., *Masculinity in medieval Europe* (Longman, 1999), 103–120 and 160–77.

<sup>66</sup> *Alphabet*, 61.

[usually] they say that they are insane or possessed by the devil. We can say of people persecuted in this way what was related about the Lord. When his own heard him, they went out to stop him and declared he had gone mad...<sup>67</sup>

We can only speculate what Osuna had in mind when he eliminated these “female” sensual/sensorial senses from his text. We know that in the 1520’s Spanish inquisitors accused of sexual impropriety several beguines linked to his Franciscan community, along with a few men, including Ignatius and his companions.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps he wanted to distance himself from them and say rapture has nothing to do with women per se. An unedited 1544 book on prayer agrees, defining *raptō* as the state where the soul is enraptured, ravished, seized (llevada) by divine virtue and enabled to learn those important things unknowable by means of the senses.”<sup>69</sup> Ignatius too seems to agree.

Ignatius’ companions, readers and editors of Ignatius works, knew what scholars today who read Ignatius as neither rapturous nor bridal ignore or forget: the intertextual context. In 1544 Ignatius’

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<sup>67</sup> “Aunque en nuestros tiempos haya muchas personas visitadas de Dios con abundancia de gracia, también hay muchos tan ajenos de ella, que viendo en otros por algunas señales exteriores lo que no ven en sí, tiénelos por locos y engañados o endemoniados, y el menor mal que otros les atribuyen es la hipocresía; empero, lo más común que les dicen es locos o endemoniados; así que de cada uno de los así perseguidos podamos decir aquello que se dijo del Señor (Mc 3,21): Como lo oyese los suyos, salieron para lo atar, y decían que se había tornado loco; y los sabios que habían descendido de Jerusalén decían que tenía demonio. Por el gran fervor del espíritu que el Señor tenía, lo querían atar; y padeció Él ser reputado por loco, según dice San Jerónimo, por mostrar en sí lo que algunos siervos suyos habían de padecer por Él. Los que no por santidad, pues no la tienen, ni por letras, pues no las saben, no pueden conocer los movimientos que suelen tener las personas devotas, luego dan mala sentencia en lo que no son jueces, y dicen que ninguno santo hizo cosas semejantes, como si ellos tuvieran conversación con todos los santos mientras vivieron en este mundo. Aunque no se escribieron todas las cosas que los santos tuvieron, bien sabemos que Santo Domingo y San Francisco y muchos de sus compañeros tuvieron cosas que no pudieron encubrir sin dar voces y gritos y tener otros movimientos no acostumbrados; y pues que ellos los tuvieron, no es mucho que ahora los tengan otras personas devotas; empero, lo más seguro es evitar toda cosa que de fuera parece, si se puede hacer sin perjuicio de la devoción verdadera. San Buenaventura habla de esto largamente, y los varones doctos que saben las raíces de las pasiones inferiores del ánima, Osuna, *Tercer Abecedario*, 221. See also *Alphabet*, 145.

<sup>68</sup> Such episode at Alcalá, almost repeated itself at Paris. Around the same time Osuna was there, Ignatius was charged with driving insane a fellow student Amador, and gained a reputation as a “seductor of students who made them become fools;” “quehabíahecho loco a Amador, [el tal] seductor de los escolares.” See Ignacio Cacho Nazábal, *Íñigo De Loyola, El Heterodoxo* (San Sebastián: Universidad de Deusto, 2006), 408. See also his *Íñigo De Loyola: Ese Enigma* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2003). For Osuna and women see Fidèle de Ros, *Un maître de saintThérèse: le père François d’Osuna : sa vie, son œuvre, sa doctrine spirituelle* (G. Beauchesne, 1936), 90-105.

<sup>69</sup> “el alma es llevada por la virtud divina y habilitada para conocer grandes cosas, que usando de los sentidos no podría conocer” Alonso de Orozco (Santo), *Comiença el libro llamado Vergel de oracion y monte de contemplacion* (en casa d[e] AntonAlvarez, 1544). Fol 192 r.

companions initiated the redaction of Ignatius' orally given *Autobiography*, which then they commented and continued in "1551, when [they] were together, and Father Ignatius said, 'now I was higher than higher than the sky,' having undergone some ecstasy or rapture of mind."<sup>70</sup>In both the 1544 *Diary* and the 1551 *Autobiography* we read of experiences such as how "in prayer, he felt such a mutation in his soul, he saw how God the Father united him with Christ His Son, with such clarity that he would not dare doubt it—that God the Father had united him with His Son."<sup>71</sup> And yet, such instances of mystical union do not lead him to feminize either the human *anima* or the divine Christ. Breaking with most medieval precedents, Ignatius will become one of the few mystics who masculinizes both the soul and God.

He does so through using Spanish masculine pronouns for both the Lover and Beloved, a distinction lost in translation. His bridal language first appearing in the *Contemplation to Attain Lovestands* apart through its radical linguistic practice of replacing the heterosexual grammar of the biblical Song of Songs with masculine endings. Ignatius must be imitating two ministers to beguines whose thinking pervaded Ignatius' school days. One of them we already met, friar Francisco Osuna. In Osuna's *Alphabet*, as in Ignatius, the audience is assumed throughout the text to be *varones*. These *varones* weep for the bridegroom, shedding "streams of tears because they do not expect to be

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<sup>70</sup> "[A]nno 1551 cum simulessemus, ut diceret Pater Ignatius: nunc ego altiorcaeloeram: (passusopinor) mentis aliquam extasim, vel raptum, ut frequenter solebat."

<sup>71</sup> "et facendo oratione, ha sentita tal mutatione nell' anima sua, et ha visto tanto chiaramente che Iddio Padre lo metteva con Cristo, suo figliuolo, che non gli basterebbe l' animo di dubitare di questo, senonche Iddio Padre lo metteva col suo figliuolo." See also Ganss, 109. This comes from the famous Ignatian "vision at La Storta" which later hagiography understood as giving Ignatius the divinely ordained plan for the future Society of Jesus. Such mystical moments are rare in the *Autobiography*. Elsewhere we have Ignatius the pilgrim. While he was seated there, the eyes of his understanding began to be opened; not that he saw any vision, but he understood and learnt many things, both spiritual matters and matters of faith and scholarship, and this with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him....The details that he understood then, though there were many, cannot be stated, but only that he experienced a great clarity in his understanding. This was such that in the whole course of his life, after completing sixty-two years, even if he gathered up all the various helps he may have had from God and all the various things he has known, even adding them all together, he does not think he had got as much as that one time" Ganss, 80. Jeronimo Nadal elsewhere adds that Ignatius during prayer found that tears show up, and there is like the beginning of an ecstasy, which our Father Ignatius almost always had.... This is ecstasy of the mind, which makes everything clear in such a way, that afterwards, there is no way or words that can speak about it. Quoted in Morano, Carlos Domínguez. "La tradición mística ignaciana" *Manresa* Vol.76 (2004), 394.

consoled only in sorrow but also in the spiritual joy that God will infuse into them later as something more excellent and precious than tears.<sup>72</sup> For Osuna and Ignatius, the lover and beloved bond through a homological binary, just as it was for our other minister to beguines, Raymond Lull.<sup>73</sup>

A medieval expert on knighthood and chivalry, Lull became famous through his *Book of the Lover and the Beloved*, condemned in Spain's 1556 *Index of the Forbidden Books*. As in English translations of Ignatius, Lull's terms for lover (*amigo*) and beloved (*amado*) lose in English their grammatical endings identifying them, not as a heterosexual couple, but as two male lovers. Lull reimagined the soul as a lover who

wandered through town like a fool, singing of his Beloved. They asked him if he had lost his mind. He answered that he had surrendered his reason when his Beloved had stolen his will. Now he only had his memory, with which he remembered his Beloved.

Like Lull's fool, a persona the Jesuit founder adopted, Ignatius surrenders his will, memory and reason becoming a madman. At several universities, inquisitors charged him with the crime of being a "seductor of students who made them become fools;"<sup>74</sup> He and his companions spent much, perhaps too much, time on a lover's tearful longing, imitating Lull's fool who "...kept watch, fasted, cried" and only after much suffering "rested on a bed of love. The sheets were made from pleasure, the coverlet from exhaustion, and the pillow from sobs."<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere Ignatius records his surrender of his mental faculties, recalling experiences involving "flashes of understanding so many and so exquisite that I have neither the memory nor the understanding to describe and explain them." Thus, an affectively tearful, gender-

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 277.

<sup>73</sup> While this hasn't been noticed in Osuna, it has in Lull's case. See Roberto J. González-Casanovas' "Male Bonding as Cultural Construction in Alfonso X, Ramon Llull, and Juan Manuel: Homosocial Friendship in Medieval Iberia," Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S Hutcherson, eds., *Queer Iberia: sexualities, cultures, and crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, Series Q* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>74</sup> "que había hecho loco a Amador, [el tal] seductor de los escolares." See Ignacio Cacho Nazábal, *Iñigo De Loyola, El Heterodoxo* (San Sebastián: Universidad de Deusto, 2006), 408. See also his *Iñigo De Loyola: Ese Enigma* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2003).

<sup>75</sup>" San Ignacio y el Beato RamonLull: Semejanzas Doctrinales" *Manresa* Vol.02 # 8 1926/4 333-350.

transgressive spirituality will move him toward a wordless apophatic, though even then, Ignatius, like a madman in love with his beloved, will not disengage himself from the masculine Word.

For example, in an often ignored appendix to the *Exercises*, Ignatius writes that if words get in the way one's discourse should not move beyond one or two words; indeed, one should make wordful prayers such as the Our Father cease to be discourse beyond the "din of words." In this

...method of praying, with each breath or sigh, one should pray mentally, saying a word of the Our Father, or any other prayer which is recited. This is done in such a manner that only one word of the prayer is said between one breath and another. At that time one should pay attention to the meaning of the word or gaze at the person addressed in prayer<sup>76</sup>

Ignatius adds that when finding delight one should stop (detenerse) instead of moving forward. By moving forward Ignatius means forward in discursive prayer. One could spend the entire time of prayer focusing attention on any word of the "Our Father." At his most obscure here, Ignatius' words beg to be clarified by one of his closest companions. The latter explains that an at first discursive explanation of the "dominical prayer of the Our Father" becomes mystical when "heavenly Father" acquires an illuminative, even erotic, sense; it thus leads the pray-er to become "clarified in divine light, and be elevated in spirit towards heaven," enraptured in an "irresistible attraction towards the Father."<sup>77</sup> This leads me to elaborate and suggest that simultaneously, Ignatius paradoxically moves forward in anapophasis of desire but not an apophasis of gender.

Sells recognizes, as a prerequisite for an apophasis of desire, the need of welcoming "risk. Rapture entails complete abandon – abandon of will, of works, of reason, of self-vulnerability"<sup>78</sup> Up to now Ignatius has prayed for the gift of being able to surrender his memory, will, and reason, everything he does and everything he possesses, including his own self. He succeeds in abandoning discursive

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<sup>76</sup> modo de orar es, que con cada vn hanhélito o resollo se ha de orar mentalmente, diziendovna palabra del Paternoster, o de otra oración que se reze, de manera que vna sola palabra se diga entre vnhanhélito y otro, y mientras durare el tiempo de vnhanhélito a otro, se mire principalmente en la significación de la tal palabra, o en la persona a quien reza, See also Ganss, 181.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, 88.

<sup>78</sup> Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 130.



thought to the utmost in his intimate *Diary*, enacting an apophysis of desire when, as entries advance chronologically, passages such as the following predominate:

Sunday [June 1]. Tears.

Monday. [June 2]. No tears.

Tuesday. [June 3]. No tears.

Wednesday [June 4]. Many and continuous tears.

Here we ought to ask why the almost wordlessness of these passages emerges as the only element that remains at the end, right before the mystical text suddenly stops. Indeed, their apophaticism, as composing a negative discourse, ought to be considered as exemplifying mystical unsaying to the utmost point, making the *Diary* one of the few texts in the history of mysticism that, moving beyond the mere stating of ineffability, effectively subvert and annihilate themselves.<sup>79</sup> Yet, when Ignatius prays for self-surrender, either God refused to grant him his wish or Ignatius himself failed to welcome risk and self-vulnerability. Ignatius annihilates himself but gendered debris remain.

Amidst all the tears of his intimate *Diary* we find a few more elaborate passages such as when he confesses how he sometimes

attended to Jesus, and felt that He was not allowing Himself to be seen or felt clearly but in some sort of shadowy way difficult to see. Then as I attended, I felt that the Blessed Trinity allowed itself to be seen or felt more clearly or full of light. I began, and reasoned for a while with the Divine Majesty. Suddenly the tears streamed down my face, I broke into sobs, and felt a love so intense that it seemed to unite me excessively close to Their own love, a thing full of light and sweetness.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> The two others would be Marguerite Porete's text, which, as Hollywood shows, by its end "has effectively subverted and annihilated itself," and Maria Maddalena de Pazzi who, after a heavenly visitation from the recently departed Ignatius, composed mystical texts which became "annihilated in their actualization." See Armando Maggi, *Uttering the Word: The Mystical Performances of Maria Maddalena De' Pazzi, a Renaissance Visionary* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 73.

<sup>80</sup> "A la entrada de la misa, de tanta deuoción, a no poder començar, o hallando tanto impedimento para dezir: in nomine Patris, etc. en toda la misa con mucho amor y deuoción y con mucha abundancia de lágrimas, y la tal deuoción y amor todo se terminaua en la Sanctíssima Trinidad, no teniendo noticias o visiones distintas de las tres personas, mas simple aduertencia o representación de la Sanctíssima Trinidad. Así mismo algunos ratos sentía lo mismo, terminando a Jesu, como hallándome a su sonbra como seyendo guía, mas no diminuyéndome la gracia de la Sanctíssima Trinidad, antes pareciendo juntarme más con la su diuina magestad... Después, yendo a la oración

Here we have some kind of visionary non-visions. Elsewhere Ignatius adds that first “[the deity] could not be seen or feel clearly, but in a way only obscurely” or that there was “no sensing of intellectual activity or distinctions or feelings of any of the persons.” And then, he “at such times, saw many times, partly, the divine being, and ending up in the Father, that is, first the essence, then the Father.”<sup>81</sup> As has been noted, images of his Virgin Lady, disappearing too, forgotten in the *Diary*, precede a progressive movement towards the Son and the Father.<sup>82</sup> Refusing to include anything that reminded him of women, he will resist, unsuccessfully, the apophatic unsaying of gender essentialism, return to the essentialist Father, “*first the essence, then the Father*” (italics mine). Appropriating Sells’ words, we have Ignatius’ mysticism tending towards the apophatic unsaying of the essentialist deity, “from this vantage point, the apophatic unsaying of the substantialist deity will be shown to be at one with the apophatic unsaying of gender essentialism.”<sup>83</sup> In such an apophasis of gender, “the soul transforms the monotonically male “He-God” of the onto-theological tradition into a dynamic and open series of gender relations,” a “critique of Trinitarian theology as theological archetype for an all-male society of processions.”<sup>84</sup> Had he followed to the end that medieval path traced by beguines, he could have shared in their vision, one potentially involving “an effacement of difference between god and the soul, uncreated and created

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preparatoria para la misa, no sabiendo por quién comenzar, y advirtiéndome primero a Jesús, y pareciéndome que no se dexauaveer o sentir claro, mas en alguna manera como oscuro para veer, y advirtiéndome que la Sanctíssima Trinidad se dexaua sentir o veer más claro o lúcido, y comenzando y después razonando adelante con la su diuina magestad, vn cubrirme de lágrimas, solloços y de vn amor tanto intenso, que me pareçiaaccessiuamente juntarme a su amor tanto lúcido y dulce, que me pareçia aquella intensa visitación y amor fuese señalada o eccelente entre otras visitaciones.” See also Munitiz ed., *Personal Writings*, 90.

<sup>81</sup> “la deuoción a nuestra Señora, no viéndola. En la misa por toda ella con deuoción, y algunas vezes con moçiones a lágrimas y después con deuoción. En estos enterbalos viendo muchas vezes en parte el seer diuino, y algunas vezes terminándose en el Padre, id est, primero la esençia y después el Padre.” See also Munitiz, 97. But even in such forgetting of feminine imagery Ignatius’ spirituality remains a bridal one. Ignatius’ Trinity “inflames him (abrasar) and/or embraces him (abrasar), holding tight Ignatius’ breasts (apretarme los pechos) and/or making him lose his breath (apretarme los pechos).” Munitiz, 379.

<sup>82</sup> Meissner, 561.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>84</sup> Sells, 195ff.

(including the body, will, and desire), and male and female..."<sup>85</sup> In sum, Ignatius shares what later became considered as some kind of *via feminina*, one involving a medieval apophysis of desire, yet the orthodox first Jesuit refuses to go as far as women often suspected of being heretics. His early modern male self remains behind, fearful of an apophysis of gender. His own masculine identity underwent a metamorphosis within a mystical relationship with the divine, one that almost shattered Ignatius' inherited notions of gendered difference.

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<sup>85</sup>*Queer Theology*, 172.

## A BEGUINE'S SPECTRE

Marguerite Porete (†1310), Achille  
Gagliardi (†1607), and  
Their Collaboration across Time

Juan Miguel Marín

**B**ETWEEN THE MONTHS of May and September 1584, in the Italo-Hispanic duchy of Milan, a laywoman, Isabella Cristina Berinzaga, took up the Spiritual Exercises that Jesuits were teaching across Italian cities. Achille Gagliardi, a Jesuit, led her in the religious practice, yet the teacher-disciple relationship turned around when Berinzaga began having mystical experiences and intellectual illuminations. Gagliardi would later say of her:

... this soul has [gained] the particular gift of being able to penetrate the heart ... at its most intimate, in such a way that when I think of what she has worked in me, I am truly astonished.<sup>1</sup>

Following a centuries-old tradition of confessors collaborating with women in writing mystical texts, Gagliardi collected her teachings under the title *Per via di annichilazione* ('By way of annihilation').<sup>2</sup> He would then work on a short treatise which could serve as a scholarly and theological exposition of Berinzaga's mysticism, *Breve compendio di perfezione cristiana*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Pietro Pirri, 'Il Achille Gagliardi, la dama milanese, la riforma dello spirito, e il movimento degli zelatori', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 14 (1945), 62. See also Achille Gagliardi, 'On Preparation for Prayer', *The Way*, 46/1 (January 2007), 91-99; and Achille Gagliardi 'Requirements for the One Giving and for the One Receiving the Exercises', *The Way*, 42/2 (April 2003), 29-40. Available online at [www.theway.org.uk/Back/461FIT.pdf](http://www.theway.org.uk/Back/461FIT.pdf) and [www.theway.org.uk/Back/422FIT.pdf](http://www.theway.org.uk/Back/422FIT.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Isabella Cristina Berinzaga, *Per via di annichilazione* (Rome: Gregorian UP, 1994). For background on the gender aspects of holy women authors and their confessors see Catherine Mooney, *Gendered Voices* (Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania P, 1999); John W. Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006) and Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife* (Indiana: U. of Notre Dame P, 1995) 26-52. For the later medieval period after 1450 see Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives* (New York: Cornell UP, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Achille Gagliardi, *Breve compendio di perfezione cristiana* (Rome: Gregorian UP, 1994).

Many translations of his Italian manuscripts survive; in particular, in 1612, the Benedictine abbess Mary Percy read a French translation of the *Breve compendio* and retranslated it, in collaboration with the Jesuit Anthony Hoskins, as *Abridgement of Christian Perfection Conteyning Many Excellent Precepts, and Aduertisments, Touching the Holy, and Sacred Mysticall Diuinity*.<sup>4</sup>

Gagliardi sums up a medieval mystical path that begins with a so-called ‘annihilation’, *annichilazione*. When the soul conforms by accepting God’s will, this makes it lose its deformities, even its own unique form, becoming a reflection of God’s divine form in an ultimate stage of ‘deiformity’, *deiformità*. Gagliardi was writing during the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, a time when each warring European faction insisted that only its side carried the divine banner of reform, while the other side could only de-form the Christian faith. The women to whom he ministered were also associated with deformity—considered at the time to be ‘deformed males’, defective individuals not adequately reflecting God’s true form.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, Gagliardi and Berinzaga taught that *all* souls are deformed by the obstacles that obscure God’s light. *All* souls can be annihilated and re-formed when God imprints on them *all* of the divine image. Although these teachings emerged, in Mary Percy’s words, from the ‘fraile and weake understanding of a

<sup>4</sup> Facsimile published in *Catherine Greenbury and Mary Percy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006). For a brief introduction see xvi–xxi. Slightly changed editions appeared in 1625 and 1626. See A. F. Allison, ‘New Light on the Early History of the *Breve Compendio*: The Background to the English Translation of 1612’, *Recusant History*, 4/1 (1957–58) and Paul Arblaster, ‘The Infanta and the English Benedictine Nuns: Mary Percy’s Memories in 1634’, *Recusant History*, 23/4 (1997), 508–527. For a wider historical context see also the dissertation by Jaime Goodrich, *Early Modern Englishwomen as Translators of Religious and Political Literature, 1500–1641* (Ann Arbor: ProQuest, 2008), 398–452.

<sup>5</sup> This idea comes from Aristotle, though St Thomas Aquinas, the primary scholastic authority for Jesuits of Gagliardi’s time, mitigates it. Aquinas accepts the scientific thought of his time, according to which woman’s nature, biologically speaking, is a deformed version of man. Nevertheless, as he replies to his critics, in regard to human nature women are fully human: God formed *both* male and female. ‘As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten .... On the other hand, as regards human nature in general, woman is not misbegotten, but is included in nature’s intention as directed to the work of generation .... Therefore, in producing nature, God formed not only the male but also the female.’ (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia, q. 92, a. 1.) For the entire question see <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1092.htm>. For the controversies surrounding ‘the concept of woman’, and the dialogue between late medieval women mystics, including Porete, and male religious, including Aquinas, see Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250–1500* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 27–180, 321–438. For the transition to the Renaissance and Reformation centuries see its section ‘Women’s Contributions to the Reform of the Concept of Woman’, 1065–1070.

simple woman,' they alarmed several officials from the Holy Inquisition.<sup>6</sup>

In order to allay inquisitorial concerns about the controversial doctrines of annihilation and deification, Gagliardi had to spend the next decade revising his text. Despite this, permission to publish it was granted only after his death. Though all the Italian printed editions of Gagliardi's manuscripts are faithful to orthodox teaching, the Inquisition put them on the Index of Forbidden Books, along with other mystical texts teaching 'new doctrines' and 'dangerous imaginations and illusions'.<sup>7</sup> This only makes sense when we compare variations in



the earliest manuscripts and read them in light of the censors' comments. Then we discover that Berinzaga and Gagliardi did indeed have radical ideas, especially in relation to 'annihilation' and 'deification'. While Gagliardi strove for orthodoxy in his publications, we will see that part of his difficult situation was due to falling under the spell of a kind of spirituality about which he had read in a book by another laywoman, who lived centuries earlier, the medieval beguine Marguerite Porete.

### **The Mirror of Simple Souls**

Porete was burned at the stake in 1310, charged with claiming in her book, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, that 'the annihilated soul is freed from the virtues'.<sup>8</sup> The Inquisitors understood her as advocating indifference

<sup>6</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', in *Catherine Greenbury and Mary Percy*, 5; and see Achille Gagliardi, *Commentaire des Exercices spirituels d'Ignace de Loyola (1590); suivi de, Abrégé de la perfection chrétienne (1588)* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1996), 22, 218.

<sup>7</sup> Pirri, 'Il Achille Gagliardi', 53; Edoardo Barbieri 'Fra tradizione e cambiamento: note sul libro spirituale del xvi secolo', in *Libri, biblioteche e letture dei frati mendicanti (secoli XIII-XIV): Atti del XXXII convegno internazionale, Assisi, 7-9 Ottobre 2004* (Spoleto: Fondazione centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2005), 39. See also Sabrina Stroppa, 'L'annichilazione e la censura: Isabella Beriganza e Achille Gagliardi', *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa*, 32 (1996), 618-625.

<sup>8</sup> 'Paris Condemnation', quoted in Joanne Maguire Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls* (New York: State U. of New York P, 2001), 109.

to moral dogmas and offering a licence to engage in shameful behaviour. But, as Porete explains, the free will of an annihilated soul,

... takes account of neither shame nor honor, of neither poverty nor wealth, of neither anxiety nor ease, of neither love nor hate, of neither hell nor paradise.<sup>9</sup>

Her teachings on annihilation and union with God echoed ideas that had been associated decades before with the so-called 'heresy of the free spirit': 'blasphem[ies]' such as that 'a person can become God' through arriving at a state where 'a soul united to God is made divine'.<sup>10</sup> In his study *The Heresy of the Free Spirit*, Robert E. Lerner identifies these two doctrines as characteristic of the 'free spirit' movement, condemned at the 1311 Council of Vienne as an 'abominable sect of certain evil men known as beghards and some faithless women called beguines'.<sup>11</sup> Lerner found that this group was composed disproportionately of women, who included Marguerite Porete. Of the men, many were also involved with the lay pious women who were known as beguines.<sup>12</sup>

Lerner follows most historical research about free spirits and beguines in not reaching beyond northern and central Europe or the fourteenth century.<sup>13</sup> He specifically tells us that he has found no evidence for free spirits any later, and claims that 'by the end of the fifteenth century the doctrines of the Free Spirit were known only to encyclopedists and antiquarians'.<sup>14</sup> But if we follow Lerner in considering the free spirit movement, not as a distinctive sect, but as a "free-spirit style" of affective mysticism particularly congenial to thirteenth-century religious women', then their history has a sequel.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Marguerite Porete, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, translated and introduced by Ellen L. Babinsky (Mahwah: Paulist, 1993), 84. It would be interesting to compare Porete's teaching on indifference with that of Ignatius of Loyola.

<sup>10</sup> 'The Compilation concerning the New Spirit', in Bernard McGinn, *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: The Modern Library, 2006), 491.

<sup>11</sup> 'Ad Nostrum', in McGinn, *Essential Writings*, 493. And compare Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit* (Berkeley: U. of California P, 1972).

<sup>12</sup> Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit*, 229, 35 following.

<sup>13</sup> See Romana Guarnieri, 'Beghinismo d'oltralpe e bizzochismo italiano tra il secolo XIV e il secolo XV', *Analecta tertii ordinis regularis sancti Francisci*, 17 (1984), 1. And compare Guarnieri, *Donna e chiesa tra mistica e istituzioni* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit*, 242.

<sup>15</sup> Robert E. Lerner, 'Introduction' to Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* (Indiana: U. of Notre Dame P, 1995).

I have argued elsewhere that the distinctive, extreme doctrines of annihilation and deification arose out of a fertile beguine imagination that nourished Porete's own individual and influential ideas in the *Mirror of Simple Souls*.<sup>16</sup> Here, Gagliardi's appropriation of these doctrines will help us see how Porete's spectral presence haunted Europe centuries after her death.<sup>17</sup> Although condemned by medieval inquisitors, the *Mirror of Simple Souls* survived as an underground classic of Christian piety, even published in 1911 by the Downside Benedictines in a modern English translation with the formal Church approvals of *nihil obstat* and *imprimatur*. While many women were involved alongside Gagliardi in their preservation, Gagliardi never accepted the inquisitorial attitudes that pejoratively dismissed these doctrines as 'feminine'. In fact, he identified them as the essence of traditional mystical theology. Gagliardi's *Breve compendio* exemplifies for us today how collaborative ministry with women flourished among Jesuits who cherished a mystical spirituality that was considered suspect. It flourished even when they faced the threat of inquisitorial arrest.

### ***The Soul's Annihilation***

Beguines were condemned at the Council of Vienne, but this only led most of them to become integrated into more orthodox structures, especially in Italy.<sup>18</sup> Many Italian beguines ended up in enclosed women's communities such as the Benedictine congregation of St Giustina which, as late as the fifteenth century, was obliged to prohibit the reading of the *Mirror of Simple Souls*.<sup>19</sup> Others affiliated themselves with male communities, especially Franciscans and, in the sixteenth century, Jesuits. Isabella Berinzaga, with whom Gagliardi collaborated, became one of these beguines, now called *beatas*, *bizzoche* or, as Gagliardi preferred, 'daughters of the Society of Jesus'.

Recent studies seem to suggest that the language of 'annihilation' was particularly popular among Italian women of the first half of the sixteenth century, when the availability of the *Mirror* was at its peak, with probably 36 copies circulating.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Juan Miguel Marín, 'Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*', *Harvard Theological Review*, 103/1 (2010), 89–109.

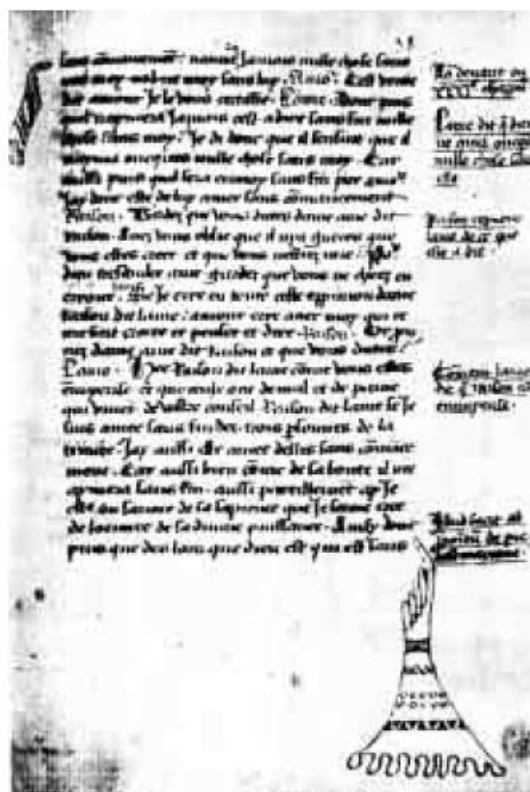
<sup>17</sup> See Michael Anthony Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: U. of Chicago P, 1994), 118.

<sup>18</sup> See Guarnieri, 'Beguine d'oltralpe', n.13.

<sup>19</sup> Guarnieri, *Donna et chiesa*, 285.

<sup>20</sup> Giovanni Pozzi and Claudio Leonardi, *Scrittrici mistiche italiane* (Genova: Marietti, 1988).





A page from a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century manuscript of the *Mirror for Simple Souls*

### *Famearness*

Perhaps part of the *Mirror's* appeal lay in its conveying an intricate theology by means of storytelling techniques found in medieval romances. Porete frames her theology within a story involving the daughter of a king who falls in love with the mighty Alexander the Great. As we read in her prologue:

Once upon a time, there was a maiden, daughter of a king, of great heart and nobility and also of noble character; and she lived in a far off land. So it happened that this maiden heard tell of the gentle courtesy and nobility of the king, Alexander, and very soon her will loved him because of the great renown of his gentility. But this maiden was so far from this great lord, in whom she had fixed her love from herself, that she was able neither to see him nor to

have him. Thus she was inconsolable in herself, for no love except this one would be sufficient for her. When she saw that this faraway love, who was so close within her, was so far outside of her, she thought to herself that she would comfort her melancholy by imagining some figure of her love, by whom she was continually wounded in heart. And so she had an image painted which would represent the semblance of the king she loved ....<sup>21</sup>

Porete here plants her first clue to the true nature of the soul, one that provides us with the first of several distinctive elements. We have, not a humble peasant, but a noble princess. And while the Latin translation uses '*imaginarium efficiens*' for the painted image that reflected and represented the king's nobility, an association with the mirror (*speculum*) of the title would be present in the reader's mind.<sup>22</sup> The image of the mirror is a common one in the mystical tradition, but there is a more particular link between the maiden's portrait and Berinzaga's concept of annihilation described by Gagliardi. He writes:

This annihilation makes the soul become a true portrait of the highest majesty of God, for by taking away all the obstacles that are between the soul and God, which is done by desiring nothing, the soul becomes like a clear and polished mirror. And just as a mirror needs to be far away in order perfectly to receive the image of an object that is immense, thus the soul—through annihilation—not only takes away all obstacles between itself and God, but most infinitely, by submission to its lowliness and acceptance of the infinite divine majesty, becomes far from it, and renders itself able to receive it. Then the Lord in the pleasure of his infinite love for that soul, suddenly imprints a living image and a true portrait of all his immensity in her deepest centre.<sup>23</sup>

What makes me link this passage above to Marguerite's *Mirror* is not only the connection between annihilation and the portrait as mirror, nor the important Poretian themes of annihilation by desiring nothing, the imprinting in the soul, recognition of humility or God's kingly majesty. A more direct link is found when all these come together, turning this passage an exegesis of the *Mirror's* prologue in light of

<sup>21</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 80.

<sup>22</sup> Hollywood, *Soul as Virgin Wife*, 89.

<sup>23</sup> Achille Gagliardi, *Breve compendio di perfezione cristiana* (Rome: Gregorian UP, 1994), 323. All translations from the Italian are mine unless noted.

Porete's distinctive theological concept of *Farnearness* (one of her names for the divine is *Loing-Près*).<sup>24</sup>

In the *Mirror*, Porete explains divine *Farnearness* as follows:

[God's] *farneess* is greater nearness, because, from nearby, in itself, it better knows what is far, which [knowing] always makes her [the Soul] to be in union by his will, without the interference of any other thing which may happen to her.<sup>25</sup>

Porete writes about how God, although from one perspective transcendent and far from creatures, knows creation best through immanence: God's nearness to them is nearer than anything else. Gaining knowledge of this helps the soul to overcome the distance between the maiden and her king. She thus becomes aware of the obstacles that superficially deform her, the specks that need to be polished away—annihilated—before the soul recognises her royal nature.

Porete's annihilation becomes for Gagliardi the way the soul is transformed into a reverse *Farnearness*, which he explains in terms of a spiritual optics:

... just as a mirror needs to be far in order perfectly to receive the image of an object that is immense, thus the soul—through annihilation—becomes far from it, and renders itself able to receive [God's majesty].

We can understand better what Gagliardi is claiming here by using an optical vocabulary that was already developed in the medieval period. The soul here is becoming a convex mirror. Convex mirrors curve outwardly and reduce the size of the object. Thus a convex soul curves towards God, yet increases the distance—through annihilation—so as to accommodate the majesty of the divine image. We could then suggest that the divine *Farnearness* is also a mirror, this time a concave one. A concave mirror curves inwards, magnifying the reflected object. God would thus draw the soul towards the divine interior, magnifying it and bringing it to ascend towards an ultimate stage of union with God.

<sup>24</sup> Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 128. And see *Le Miroir des simples âmes anéanties et qui seulement demeurent en vouloir et désir d'amour*, translated by Claude Louis-Combet and edited by Emilie Zum Brunn (Paris: Jérôme Millon, 1991), 133.

<sup>25</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 218.

Gagliardi distances himself from the traditional understanding of mystical ascent, a spiritual and sequential moving towards God, by appropriating Porete's claim that this *moving towards* can also be seen as *moving away*. Porete's Farnearness supports such a paradox. Farnearness consists of a movement backwards which then brings the soul forward, closer to God (a theological innovation original to Porete).<sup>26</sup> What she means by Farnearness is part of a paradoxical subversion of the rhetoric of ascent and descent that she introduces in her penultimate stage of union with God. We know that Gagliardi is elaborating on Porete because, when he too writes about a penultimate degree or step before final ascent, the soul follows this same trajectory. It is first 'highly raised unto vertue ... and by this height of vertue the soul is plunged into this low estate ...'.<sup>27</sup> Here we have not only Porete's parabolic movement, but even an incorporation of Porete's radical and original doctrine of the virtues. I am citing Mary Percy's early seventeenth-century English translation, because it is the only one that preserves without censorship this last Poretian element.

### ***The Soul's Deiformity***

#### *Leaving the Virtues*

In Mary Percy's English we find how the annihilated soul reaches an ultimate state of deiformity, when the text echoes Luke 22:42 ('not my will, but yours be done'). The soul leaves 'all her actions, desires, & workes ... [i]n such sort, that even in vertues, and holy thinges, she willeth them no more'.<sup>28</sup> This Poretian claim is implicit in Gagliardi's account of Berinzaga's annihilation, 'done by desiring nothing'—now, not even virtue. The same passage in the Italian critical edition of the *Breve compendio* is based on a version only available in the 1611 edition. It is identical to the English except that it eliminates the controversial mention of virtues. In the English the soul 'leaveth all acts of virtue', but here it merely leaves 'all her desires and works ... that even holy things she wills them no more',<sup>29</sup> distancing itself from Porete's claim that the annihilated soul 'takes leave of the virtues'.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 128.

<sup>27</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 74.

<sup>28</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 115.

<sup>29</sup> Gagliardi, *Breve compendio*, 336.

<sup>30</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 84.

In Percy's English translation, however, Gagliardi agrees with Porete that one must annihilate all desires, even those to do good works. This conflicts with his belief that the *duty* to do them is not eliminated. So he defends Porete when she says that 'the soul is a slave to virtue', but by citing Paul who 'made himself a slave to deliver another slave'.<sup>31</sup>

***At that  
moment no  
one works,  
only God.***

This helps us to understand his claim that annihilation involves first recognition of [the soul's] lowliness and acceptance of the infinite divine majesty': in its lowliness the soul must allow itself to be enslaved as a prelude to its liberation. Gagliardi accepts Porete's claim that the enslaving duty of the virtues can be a burden, but this does not mean one is exempt from doing good works whenever possible. He adapts Porete, reading her phrase 'taking leave of the virtues' as meaning that one may leave one virtue, such as prayerful meditation, in order to accept a higher one, such as serving the neighbour. After engaging in good works one must always return to restful contemplation, in which the soul 'works no more'. Desire for ministry must never exclude taking a moment for prayer. At that moment no one works, only God. Porete and Gagliardi also suggest a solution to the anxiety caused by the burden of duty when one is not able to do good works. One must consider oneself unworthy even of doing good works and accept God's will when this happens. This will give the soul 'peace and tranquility'.

*Perfect Identity*

Leaving the virtues leads to an ultimate state of remaining 'in the will of God, greatly deified, by being totally the same, and united to it'.<sup>32</sup> In the Italian critical edition the editors give us several variants for this statement. Some manuscripts originally had '*totale*', but Gagliardi replaced it with what the critical edition has as '*perfetta identità*', 'perfect identity'.<sup>33</sup> Others add qualifiers, such as identity or union 'with propriety' or, elsewhere, specify that the union is only of the wills. We know that Gagliardi was asked several times to revise his manuscript, especially because of his views on total identity and the 'real deification' of the soul.<sup>34</sup> In one commentary an inquisitor explains that if Gagliardi means

<sup>31</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 78.

<sup>32</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 81.

<sup>33</sup> Gagliardi, *Breve compendio*, 241 nn. 983 and 985.

<sup>34</sup> Gagliardi, *Breve compendio*, 41.

identity as union of wills, or an apparent affective identity of hearts and souls, then his view is tolerable.<sup>35</sup> He seems concerned that 'identity' in the text implies indistinction between human, created nature and divine, uncreated nature. His confusion arises once he reads Gagliardi's mystical theology as a heretical christology.<sup>36</sup>

Gagliardi indeed upholds such an indistinction, but as a Christian, messianic hope. He strongly believes in the future fulfilment of Christ's prayer: 'that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us.' (John 17: 21) We will become 'deified, in imitation of that union which the Son has with the eternal Father',<sup>37</sup> but only once we recognise that we *all* share the same human nature as the Son of God, and participate in the same divine nature through mystical union with him. Such indistinction will lead, then, to nondiscrimination, in which the soul annihilates its own identity. The soul will realise that 'there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3: 28).

We will understand the censor's suspicions better when we look at other expurgated words relating to mystical loss of identity, that reveal views Gagliardi's contemporaries considered too radical.

*Drops in the Ocean*

Gagliardi suffered a similar censorship when he, like Porete, explained *annichilazione* by appropriating images from mystical literature. In Porete's text the soul,

... loses her name in the One in whom she is melted and dissolved through Himself and in Himself. Thus she would be like a body of water which flows from the sea, which has some name, as one would be able to say Aisne or Seine or another river. And when this water or river returns into the sea, it loses its course and its name ....<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Pietro Piri, 'Il breve compendio di Achille Gagliardi al vaglio di teologi gesuiti', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 20 (1951), 201.

<sup>36</sup> The heresies in question are monothelism and eutychianism, at the time often conflated. See Gagliardi, *Breve compendio*, 241 n. 985. Historians understand the former as claiming that Christ had two natures but only one will. The latter comes closer to monophysitism, claiming that Christ had only one nature. For a discussion on the complexity, even incoherence, of late medieval heresiology see Kevin Madigan, *The Passions of Christ in High-Medieval Thought: An Essay on Christological Development* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Gagliardi, *Breve compendio*, 335.

<sup>38</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 158.

As Ellen Babinsky, the translator of the English critical edition of *Mirror for Simple Souls*, observes, 'It is difficult to see how Marguerite could be any more clear about the nature of the union as identity'.<sup>39</sup>

In the 'epistle dedicatory' to her English translation of Gagliardi, Mary Percy describes his text as a preparation to receive,

... the holy embracings of your most loyal, and most faithful Bridegrome; or when you shall be absorpt and as it were drowned in that deepe, and large Ocean of his bounty and mercy, which hath neither end nor limit.<sup>40</sup>

But, by contrast with this intense bridal metaphor for loving union with God, the image of water appears in a banal form in Gagliardi's own text, even in the Italian critical edition. Here the soul undergoes annihilation 'in the manner in which a drop of water relative [*rispetto*] to the sea is nothing'.<sup>41</sup> This image involves no more than a cognitive process by which the soul compares itself to everything else in order to become aware of its own nothingness. In this version the annihilation of a drop of water in the sea is reduced to a simile which offers us only a static comparison between human nothingness and divine majesty. It is interesting to note that in those Italian versions the editors mention, but did not use, the word '*rispetto*' is omitted: '*nel modo che una goccia d'acqua al mare e niente*'. This could be translated as saying that the annihilated soul is nothing in the same way that a drop of water in, or towards, the sea is nothing. This alternative brings us closer to Porete's original image. The use of *rispetto* suggests an interpretation that is restricted to human humility. In the alternative version the preposition *al* now indicates movement towards annihilation in God.

This version also recalls Isabella Berinzaga's abyss imagery. For Gagliardi, Isabella's annihilated or 'abyssed' (*abyssata*) soul is drawn towards God in a mystical experience:

Finally, the Lord showed her why he was pleased in pulling her to himself by means of this way of annihilation .... [And she exclaimed]: 'Oh light that has illuminated my darkness! .... This abyss of my nothingness cries out to you, my most beloved Lord ....'<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ellen L. Babinsky, 'Introduction', in Porete, *Mirror for Simple Souls*, 45.

<sup>40</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 7.

<sup>41</sup> '*nel modo che una goccia d'acqua rispetto al mare e niente*' (Gagliardi, *Breve compendio*, 187).

<sup>42</sup> Berinzaga, *Per via di annichilazione*, 142–143.

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<sup>39</sup> Ellen L. Babinsky, 'Introduction', in Porete, *Mirror for Simple Souls*, 45.

<sup>40</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 7.

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<sup>42</sup> Berinzaga, *Per via di annichilazione*, 142–143.



It is possible that Berinzaga here, as a 'daughter of the Society of Jesus', found inspiration in a mystical text popular among Jesuit novices, the *Book of the Blessed Angela of Foligno*.<sup>43</sup> Angela and other late medieval women mystics expressed their mystical theology through imagery of the ocean or the abyss, to symbolize divine absorption.<sup>44</sup> Porete's doctrine of annihilation and deification appropriates these and other beguine ideas about the return to an original pre-creation state, a divine 'abyss of nothingness'.<sup>45</sup>

#### *Divine Nothingness*

Porete presents this mystical doctrine as having been revealed by the divine personification of Truth,

... who told me that I will not see the divine Trinity until my soul is without stain of sin, like [the soul] of Jesus Christ .... Then I pondered who it is who will ascend to heaven. And Truth told me that no one will ascend there except the one who descended, that is, the Son of God Himself. This means that no one can ascend there except only those who are sons of God through divine grace.<sup>46</sup>

Christ is made to descend by the Father in order to recover fallen souls and bring them back in a soteriological ascent. Porete's salvation, not through works but through annihilation, means then that the soul is recovered when it ceases to be and only Christ remains. Gagliardi elsewhere describes washing away the stain of sin, the removal of the obstacles between the soul and God, as making the mind a 'tabula rasa', a blank slate welcoming whatever God wills.<sup>47</sup> Both Porete and Gagliardi claim that, in this way, the soul can return to a pre-creation state in the divine nothingness from which it was distanced. Imitating Christ's return to the Father, the soul 'returns to her prior being' having 'conquered the necessity of two natures'.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> See Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 272–279 and 219–45, *passim*. See also Juan Miguel Marín, 'On Confusion and On Prayer: St Francisco Borja', *The Way*, 50/4 (October 2011), 55. Available at [www.theway.org.uk/Back/504Marin.pdf](http://www.theway.org.uk/Back/504Marin.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> See B. McGinn, 'Ocean and Desert as Symbols of Mystical Absorption in the Christian Tradition', *The Journal of Religion* (1994), 155–181.

<sup>45</sup> See Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 131–134, and Marín, 'Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology', 89–109.

<sup>46</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 209.

<sup>47</sup> Gagliardi echoes this annihilation of encumbrances, or removal of impediments elsewhere. See Gagliardi, 'Requirements for the One Giving and for the One Receiving the Exercises', 38.

<sup>48</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 219–220.

All manuscripts of the *Compendio* agree that for Gagliardi imitating the union of the Son and Father's divine natures requires the soul to relinquish existence. The critical edition has 'we are, in a way [*in certo modo*], no more'.<sup>49</sup> The imitation of the divine persons is supposed to include a transformation that still preserves distinction. Mary Percy's English has 'although the persons are really distinct they nevertheless transform themselves by the force of this love ... that one truly seems to be the other'.<sup>50</sup> The editors of the Italian critical edition have the same.<sup>51</sup> Yet their version, chosen from three possible variants, reveals something interesting. They use the published text that has the persons as being '*realmente distinte*'—rather than just '*distinte*' or, in the third option, supposedly an error, '*di niente*'. The editors are aware that the multiple revisions in the several manuscripts of Gagliardi's text reveal the controversy that lies behind them, but seem to forget this background here. Gagliardi is attempting to satisfy his censors while preserving the teaching of a condemned heretic, again no easy task.

In light of Porete, and of passages elsewhere in Gagliardi, we can restore the variant reading '*di niente*' ('from nothingness') rather than '*distinte*', and make the passage cohere with the rest of the text. Gagliardi's radicalness lies in the fact that he originally interpreted annihilation and deification, following Porete, as ceasing to be by returning to a primal nothingness in which the distinction between humanity and divinity is eradicated. We know this, first, because all Italian texts repeatedly use '*niente*' to indicate how man has his 'first origin in nothing' (*prima origine dal niente*) and then, in sin, 'tends to the same nothing' (*tende al medesimo niente*).<sup>52</sup> Mary Percy's English varies the latter to: 'tending to return to the same nothing yf God by his bounty did not conserve him'.<sup>53</sup> The later Italian versions treat nothingness as sin and annihilation as consciousness of sin: 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust' (Genesis 3:19); we come from nothingness and to nothingness we shall return. In contrast, Percy's version preserves Gagliardi's original intention.

Gagliardi de-emphasized sin by focusing on its nothingness. As the soul advances it ought not to 'take care, or be too much grieved if she

<sup>49</sup> Gagliardi, *Breve compendio*, 335.

<sup>50</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 116.

<sup>51</sup> Gagliardi, *Breve compendio*, 336.

<sup>52</sup> Gagliardi, *Breve compendio*, 323.

<sup>53</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 83.

BREVE  
**COMPENDIO**  
 INTORNO  
 ALLA PERFETTIONE  
 CHRISTIANA.

Donde si vede vna prattica mi-  
 rabile per vnire l'anima  
 con D I O.

Del M. R. P Achille Gagliardi. Teo-  
 logo della Cópagnia di GESÙ.



IN NAPOLI,  
 Per Gio. Giacomo Carlino. 1614.

*Title page of an early edition of Gagliardi's Breve compendio*

attain not to that height of perfection'.<sup>54</sup> Overemphasis on sin nullifies God's grace. For if justification comes from living a life according to law-designated virtues then Christ died for nothing, for the insignificant nothingness of sin. Emphasizing that Christ died for human sin comes at the price of forgetting the one important thing: if I constantly remind myself that Christ died for my sins, I risk forgetting that Christ died out of love for me. Gagliardi's inquisitors looked towards the past, to Adam's original sin. Gagliardi looks to the salvific future that is reached through imitation of Christ.

Gagliardi identified the deifying process of imitating Christ with a transforming mimesis of the divine persons: they come 'from nothing' in

<sup>54</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 215.

order to return to, transform into, each other in Love. Inquisitors, of both Porete's and Gagliardi's times, feared that in annihilation human consciousness forgets the shame of original sin, losing its awareness of the abyssal chasm of its own distinction from God. But Porete and Gagliardi explained that annihilation bridges the chasm: the consciousness of an original indistinction is regained. This is not Adam's paradise lost, but Christ's paradise regained.

*Leaving God*

Porete concludes by revealing how the soul must learn to love God by leaving God. At first the annihilated soul maintains with certainty that,

... even if I might suffer as much poverty, rejection and torments as He has goodness, wisdom, and power in Him ... still I would love better such torments if I had them from Him, than I would whatever eternal glory I might have from myself.<sup>55</sup>

It would rather suffer eternal torment than do anything to displease God. God's love merits self-denial. But this certainty is challenged when the soul is asked what would happen if Love were to love someone else more, challenging its cherished assumption. To this it has no response, but falls into a state of stupefaction.<sup>56</sup>

Gagliardi borrows this material without much modification in order to elaborate on what annihilation means, especially the annihilation of the will in order to allow God to work through the soul. In several places, with many variants, he tells us how one should be resolute 'rather to suffer a thousand deaths, than to offend God'. This is not exaltation of suffering itself—'this very suffering has its limits ...'—but of the soul's prompt 'disposition to submit herself all in all, to that which God will work in her, by her and with her, according to his divine pleasure'.<sup>57</sup> Gagliardi's utter annihilation of the self only adds the lesson to be derived from Porete's own trial. One should be ready to surrender even God's gifts, 'if he were to give and make a present of them unto any creature whatsoever ... and this for his Love'.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 212.

<sup>56</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 214.

<sup>57</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 43.

<sup>58</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 91.

In Porete, faced with the need to give away even God's gifts, the soul almost wavers but finally surrenders, doing so 'for the sake of your divine will alone'.<sup>59</sup> Willing to give up even God's love, the soul surpasses her 'infancy'. Gagliardi stops here, and does not borrow any more. He has already transferred all the elements he needs, including the return to prior being, from the end of the *Mirror*. He identifies the moment when Porete takes leave, not only of God's gifts of love, but also of God Godself, as the moment where annihilation leads to deification, when the soul 'leaveth God for God .... From whence follows a most high transformation and an admirable Deification'.<sup>60</sup> By now, the soul in love with God has annihilated everything within itself, including its own limited ideas about divinity. Gagliardi appropriates from Porete a radical annihilation and divinisation, a mystical union into actual, inseparable identity. Nothing remains but God and, for the annihilated soul, not even God remains.

#### ***How to Heal Souls***

The 1612 English *Abridgement of Christian Perfection* concludes by introducing a nameless holy woman as the true author of the text, Gagliardi being merely her scribe:

While I was writing a copy of this booke, our Lord made this vertous Dame that composed it, to understand, that she should advertise me as follows .... Advertise thy spiritual father, that he may learne, that, when anyone would heal a soule, ... [it is] by this meanes [that] she may more easily attaine unto the soveraigne perfection of the said love of God.<sup>61</sup>

Later editions amended this passage, erasing the memory of Isabella Berinzaga's contribution, just as centuries earlier inquisitors attempted to erase Marguerite Porete's authorial identity.<sup>62</sup> Yet their message survived.

Porete taught that:

All those who are planted as seeds from the Father and are come into this world, have descended from the perfect into the imperfect, in

<sup>59</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 168.

<sup>60</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 81.

<sup>61</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', 150.

<sup>62</sup> Gagliardi, 'Abridgement of Christian Perfection', xvi.

order to attain to the most perfect. And the wound is opened in order to heal those who are wounded ....

Once the soul has attained the 'most perfect', Love holds it in '... the country of complete peace ... for she is in the sovereign state ...' where nothing interior or exterior can disturb it.<sup>63</sup> Along an arduous path the soul finally returns to its Sovereign King. Gagliardi appropriated what Love revealed first to the medieval holy dame and then to his spiritual daughter and mother Berinzaga: how to heal souls. Perhaps not in their lifetimes, but certainly afterwards, their works reached their goal. Through the extremely popular English, French and German translations of Gagliardi's text, the *Mirror* indirectly gave rise to much of the spiritual language of the seventeenth century. In this way, Porete's healing message reached yet another century unable to exorcise the beguine's spectral presence.

*Juan Miguel Marín* is a DTh. candidate at Harvard Divinity School, specialising in the history of Christianity. Originally from Puerto Rico, he attended Tufts University and later Harvard, from which he received his MTS and MDiv. degrees. He is currently writing a dissertation entitled 'Firestone of Divine Love: Erotic Desire in Hispanic Jesuit Mysticism'. His two most recent articles, 'A Lucan Kenosis? Luke's Concept of Truth as an Ethics of Service' and 'Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*' have been published respectively in the *Journal of Scripture and Philosophy* and *Harvard Theological Review*. His essay 'A Jesuit Mystic's Feminine Melancholia: Jean-Joseph Surin (1600–1665)' was chosen to appear in *Best of the Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spiritualities*.

<sup>63</sup> Porete, *Mirror of Simple Souls*, 156.

*From the Ignatian Tradition*

## **ON CONFUSION AND ON PRAYER**

**St Francisco Borja (1510–1572)**

*Juan Miguel Marín*

**I**N HIS CLASSIC BOOK *The Jesuits, Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice: A Historical Study*, Joseph de Guibert ponders a historical mystery involving the third Jesuit Superior General, St Francisco Borja, and his spiritual writings. De Guibert wonders why, unlike those of other Jesuit authors, Borja's meditations and prayers were not published until more than four centuries after his death.

We might ask why these meditations, almost complete in manuscript, were not published after Borgia's death ... Were they found to be too imperfect? I would rather believe that their general tone and the whole orientation of these touching meditations was too severe, too full of the thought of penance and human misery.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps de Guibert based his not entirely accurate interpretation on Borja's idea of 'dealing with confusion by praying with Christ's suffering Humanity': that is, identifying his own human sufferings with those of Christ's passion, and then both of these with the sufferings of the people he encountered every day in ministry. But even in that case de Guibert would be leaving out the crucial context which gives us the missing element; after Christ's passion follows the resurrection.

Although not meant for publication, copies of Borja's meditations did circulate among his spiritual sons and daughters. As exemplified in the excerpts below, translated from his 'Brief Treatise on Confusion'

<sup>1</sup> Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits, Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice: A Historical Study* (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1972), 196 n. 34.

and 'Spiritual Treatise on Prayer', he often addressed the anonymous reader as *alma mia*, a term of endearment that literally means 'my soul'. His writing ministry became for him one more way to follow Ignatius' call 'to help souls'.<sup>2</sup>

Borja wrote the two treatises in the 1550s, at the time when he became St Teresa of Avila's Jesuit confessor.<sup>3</sup> St Teresa credits Borja with sharing with her his idea of 'praying with Christ's suffering humanity', strengthening her resolve to pursue mystical prayer, and nullifying the fears that some of her other confessors instilled in her. She contrasts him with those who suspected her mystical experiences to be demonically inspired:

After Father Borgia had listened to my account, he told me that my experiences definitely came from the spirit of God. 'I see no reason for you to continue trying to push these gifts away', he said. 'I can see how this resistance has been an appropriate practice up to now, but it would be a mistake to continue it. The time has come to embrace all blessings. You should still begin each period of silent prayer by meditating on a phase of the Passion, but then if the Lord transports your spirit, you must let him take it. But you shouldn't try to make this flight of the spirit happen on your own either.'

Since Father Borgia was so evolved, he knew the right medicine to give me and the advice that would be most useful. His counsel deeply consoled me.<sup>4</sup>

Borja encouraged her struggles in a racist and misogynist society—one that suspected her twice, first for being of 'impure blood', namely having Jewish ancestors, and secondly for being a woman, who was leading a community of other women living independently of men.<sup>5</sup> He encouraged her to remain 'indifferent' to her situation, in the Ignatian

<sup>2</sup> Borja's meditations have been collected in Francisco de Borja, *Tratados espirituales* (Barcelona: J. Flors, 1964).

<sup>3</sup> Cándido de Dalmases, *Francis Borgia: Grandee of Spain, Jesuit, Saint* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991), 101.

<sup>4</sup> *Teresa of Avila: The Book of My Life*, translated by Mirabai Starr (Boston: Shambhala, 2008), 179–180.

<sup>5</sup> The recently published personal writings of Pedro de Ribadeneira, Borja's and Ignatius' first biographer, reveal that Borja took seriously Galatians 3:28: 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus'. According to Ribadeneira, he welcomed marginalised people, even more than his predecessors in the generalate. (Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Confesiones: Autobiografía documentada* [Santander: Sal Terrae, 2009], 203. See also Alison Weber's excellent discussion, *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990].)



sense of *indiferencia*. If God brings her tribulations, she should welcome them as an opportunity for patience; if God brings her ecstasies, she should welcome them as an opportunity for joy.

Borja himself prayed using the methods he shared with Teresa. He often started by meditating on the wounds of Christ:

Consider how Christ opened his side to be our dwelling and our nest. Never a bird, no matter how much it loved its offspring, ever gave them its heart as nest, as Christ did. Considering the generosity of his side wound ought to move us to worship him and enter him with humility and charity. It was for this that he was opened.<sup>6</sup>

Here the future saint meditates intensely, gazing at Christ's suffering body. As a Jesuit, Borja learnt Ignatian spiritual practices of meditation in which he created sensorial, passionate compositions out of scenes from the Gospels, including himself as a character. His cherishing of medieval spirituality led him, too, to extend such sensoriality and passion to the mystical bridal language he found in the biblical Song of Songs and especially in the writings of women such as the thirteenth-century Franciscan laywoman Blessed Angela of Foligno.

Angela made devotion to Christ's wounds a highly influential practice in Catholic spirituality. Borja knew by heart all about her Franciscan spirituality and her experience of God. He integrated his ministerial and reading experiences into his Ignatian prayer, including that of teaching Jesuit novices the meditations found in the popular *Book of the Blessed Angela of Foligno*. Angela writes:



Angela of Foligno, by Gaetano Gandolfi

<sup>6</sup> Francisco de Borja, 'Tratado espiritual de la oración' (1557), *Tratados espirituales*, 327.



St Francis Borgia Kneeling before the Body of Queen Isabella of Spain,  
by Antonio Palomino

... while I was standing in prayer, Christ on the cross appeared more clearly to me while I was awake, that is to say, he gave me an even greater awareness of himself than before. He then called me to place my mouth to the wound in his side. It seemed to me that I saw and drank the blood, which was freshly flowing from his side. His intention was to make me understand that by his blood he would cleanse me ....<sup>7</sup>

Borja cherished passages such as this because he, like Angela, entered religious life to regain the joy he had lost after the death of a loved one.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, his first encounter with death, gazing at the corpse of the once beautiful Queen Isabella of Spain, made him vow 'Never more, never more, will I serve a master who can die'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works*, translated by Paul Lachance (New York: Paulist, 1993), 128.

<sup>8</sup> Borja, *Tratados espirituales*, 44.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of this episode in Borja's life, see Dalmases, *Francis Borgia*, 15–18.

He sought refuge from sorrow in religious life, where he realised that ‘many of us cease to persevere in prayer because of the distress and exhaustion that we experience. This can be a result of discouraging and fatiguing the understanding.’ He overcame this problem having found that by contemplating Christ’s side wound and finding refuge in entering it, one could attain union with God.<sup>10</sup>

The wisdom he gained from his years of prayerful spiritual experience he shared with his fellow Jesuits, to whom he offered similar advice. For example, in his ‘Seven Meditations on the Seven Sources of Blood’ he suggests to his brothers who struggled with sexual desire and celibacy:

Seek the Lord, so that those wounds become medicine for your own, and your soul becomes a recipient for that blood so that you can offer it to the eternal Father, beseeching him for the gift of chastity.<sup>11</sup>

Borja shares here and elsewhere insights gained through spiritual practice. He found that contemplating Christ’s bloody wounds, visualising himself entering and seeking refuge in them, helped him extinguish those misguided desires that made him restless.<sup>12</sup> Borja encouraged many similarly restless readers to join him as fellow contemplatives in action. Among such readers encouraged to meditate on Christ’s wounds we find ‘knights and busy people’.<sup>13</sup>

When Borja prayed with Ignatius’ exercises meditating on the three faculties of the soul (memory, will and understanding), he also followed St Augustine, linking them to the Holy Trinity. In his contemplation, ‘The Soul as Dwelling of the Three Divine Persons: On Being Moved by the Love of God’, he presents human love towards other persons as proceeding from the Trinity’s love towards each of the Three Persons. As a student of Augustine’s Platonic philosophy, Borja understood the goal in prayer as being swept up in divine *eros*. *Eros*—intense and

<sup>10</sup> See Amy Hollywood, ‘“That Glorious Slit”: Irigaray and the Medieval Devotion to Christ’s Side Wound’, *Luce Irigaray and Premodern Culture: Thresholds of History* (London: Routledge, 2004), 105–125; ‘The Mystical Body: Religion, Postmodernity and Nostalgia’, *The Way Supplement*, 102 (Autumn 2001), 49–60; and ‘Beautiful as a Wasp’: Angela of Foligno and Georges Bataille’, *The Harvard Theological Review*, 92/2 (1999), 219–236.

<sup>11</sup> Borja, ‘Siete meditaciones sobre las siete fuentes de sangre’ (c.1551–1561?), *Tratados espirituales*, 428.

<sup>12</sup> Borja reveals more of his restless life, and his prayer refuge, in his ‘Spiritual Diary’: see Manuel Ruiz Jurado’s introductory study to *San Francisco de Borja: Diario espiritual (1564–1570)* (Santander: Mensajero, 1997), especially 117–133.

<sup>13</sup> Borja, ‘Ejercicio espiritual para caballeros y personas ocupadas’ (c.1551–1561?), *Tratados espirituales*, 412–414.

ecstatic love—involved a parabolical movement from divine to human that impelled the soul towards a burning embrace in the fire of God's love. He exhorts, 'allow yourself to be ignited in the fire of your Beloved and become as supple as burlap in order to be more easily burned'.<sup>14</sup> Such an ignition of erotic desire for God begins with Ignatius' application of the senses, in which exercitants are asked to immerse themselves in the Gospels' narrative and identify themselves with the human and divine characters in a sensorial, affective, way: '... smell the fragrance and taste the infinite sweetness and charm of the Divinity, of the soul, of its virtues, and of everything there, appropriately for each of the persons ....' (Exx 124) As Borja adds in the 'Spiritual Treatise On Prayer', one should kindle desire for 'a beloved whom one is anxious to see, hear, taste and possess' in the same way as the psalmist: 'as a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God' (Psalms 42:1).<sup>15</sup>

Among the goals of Borja's writing ministry we thus find his sharing with the reader a refuge from the many anxieties that can be encountered in everyday ministerial life. He knew by experience that,

... those who want to recollect themselves in prayer must become labourers who returns home .... Whoever desires to enter the state of prayer must come home, tired from the works of the senses, exhausted from so much talking and so much looking and hearing in vain, afflicted by the understanding, and crushed by the appetites of the will ....<sup>16</sup>

He understands that anxiety can show up not only in active ministry but also in contemplative prayer. Even meditation with images and words can produce tension. Thus, he leads his audience from discursive prayer to a mystical approach that results in what he calls annihilation by means of *confusión*.

Borja describes *confusión* as a breakdown of the understanding. The understanding is like a clock demanding to be stopped because it 'is running too fast'.<sup>17</sup> When life runs fast like this one must annihilate the self and die spiritually. Only then will one be created anew:

<sup>14</sup> Borja, 'El alma morada de las tres divinas Personas: "Que haremos cuando somos movidos en el amor de Dios"', (before 1559), *Tratados espirituales*, 405.

<sup>15</sup> Borja, 'Tratado espiritual de la oración', 359.

<sup>16</sup> Borja, 'Tratado espiritual de la oración', 329.

<sup>17</sup> Borja, 'Breve tratado de la confusión' (1550), *Tratados espirituales*, 160.

One of the things that hinder you, my dear, in finding the peace and love of the Beloved is when you stray away through the senses, spending too much time in seeing and in speaking ....

Now go to Christ, our redeemer and divine healer, and showing him in a handful your wounds, ask for compassion saying: ... I am asking you to rebuild what I have destroyed, write what I have erased, create anew what I have annihilated.<sup>18</sup>

One of the sources of agitation that he mentions is his experience of loss or tormenting desires. The turmoil of emotions needs to be addressed if he is to remain sane. His longing for peace brings memories of love, which he identifies as pointing towards Christ the Beloved. He realises that brooding over stressful situations only increases his suffering.

To attain peace one must first achieve annihilation by removing attachment to any created being (*ser*). In 'Soul of Christ, Exemplar' he urges the reader: 'Remove, remove, that being without being [*ser sin ser*], annihilate, annihilate that self [*ser*] of yours you held in such high esteem ...'.<sup>19</sup> One does not attain this annihilation through knowledge; it is not possible, indeed, to attain annihilation through knowledge since the cognitive faculties required by knowledge will themselves have been annihilated. One does not even need any strenuous practice. On the contrary, all Borja suggests is to adopt Ignatius' prayer offering 'all my possessions, and myself along with them ....'

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and all my will; all that I have and all that I possess. All this you have given me, Lord, and I return them to you (Exx 234).

For Borja, one attains annihilation through offering Christ's blood to the Father, that is, by sharing in 'the chalice of his Passion' as an Ignatian offering of the faculties to the Father. We can do so by offering those little sacrifices we are able to make every day. Serving those who need us the most, especially when they are not those we *want* to serve the most. Suffering with patience those little things that annoy us, showing compassion towards those who irritate us. '[F]or to serve you is to reign, to suffer for you is to rejoice.'<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Borja, 'Breve tratado de la confusión', 158.

<sup>19</sup> Borja, 'Dechado del alma de Cristo', (1551-1553), in *Tratados espirituales*, 231.

<sup>20</sup> Borja, 'Dechado del alma de Cristo', 227.

In this return to the Father one attains deification, that is, becoming divinised, not by being in the sense of Christ's divine 'hypostatic union, but by being [*siendo*] in the sense of loving union, a great gift since you will be [ser] one spirit with God'.<sup>21</sup> Borja here has in mind 1 John 3: 2–3,

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.

Thus we can suggest that mystical *confusión* serves as antidote to worldly confusion and leads to heavenly con-fusion—becoming one with God. The restlessness of the former arises when time is not taken to settle down and find a moment of respite in the latter's union with the Beloved. For Borja the desire to be 'annihilated' does not imply a suicidal tendency but a desire to return, rebuilt, to everyday ministerial life.

#### **FROM ST FRANCISCO BORJA'S 'SPIRITUAL TREATISES'**

##### ***Brief Treatise on Confusion***<sup>22</sup>

*Concerning Obstacles in Prayer and How to Overcome Them*

One of the things that hinder you, my dear, in finding the peace and love of the Beloved is when you stray away through the senses, spending too much time in seeing and in speaking. This can be a bad habit acquired in childhood, making it difficult to overcome. For this you will need good acts and from them acquire good habits. The other obstacle is even deeper and therefore more harmful. It arises out of the understanding's tending towards futile conceptualising. By means of this the understanding puts before the will harmful lures that make it stumble, when it should be illuminating the blind will in order to bring it to love that which is to be loved. It wastes time away in useless discourse, harming itself and destroying the will. Greater harm comes to us from the will which, when not disciplined, becomes attached to lower things, things that make restless the one who is attached to them. Since our affection is divided among many things, each of these takes control of the will, fighting it. If the wretched will saw itself, it would flee, as if from an enemy that is not desired by God.

<sup>21</sup> Borja, 'Dechado del alma de Cristo', 231.

<sup>22</sup> Borja, 'Breve tratado de la Confusión', 158–160.

*Overcoming the Obstacles*

When the obstacles are stronger it is more difficult to overcome them. The first way to do this is to recognise that, since you were at first part of the problem, or even the whole problem, when drawing to yourself all that afflicts you, you will now decide to be part of its conquering. At first you acted without the help of the Holy Spirit, who in kindness gives us the will and the means. Now go to Christ, our redeemer and divine healer, and showing him in a handful your wounds, ask for compassion saying: Lord this is what I am going to do. Here am I, do with me whatever needs to be done. I want to be yours because of who you are.

***I am asking  
you to rebuild  
what I have  
destroyed***

I am asking you to rebuild what I have destroyed, write what I have erased, create anew what I have annihilated. Finally, bind me to you because my emotions have rebelled against me, agitating me. If your compassion does not come to my aid I will get lost in frenzy.

My dear, once you start to trust yourself again, decide to reorganize the disorder that has come through the senses. Because this lack of discipline began in childhood, return to this source and become like a child again in order to renew your senses. At that time you did not place enough importance on what was seen or heard so as to become attached. So now pay no attention to what is seen or heard until you have gained such discipline that what comes through the senses does not become an obstacle, but serves as fuel for burning yourself in divine love. If still attached to things, remember that you will die and that everything is impermanent. Remind yourself that nothing remains of what is past so that this will help you overcome these obstacles.

Another way of overcoming the harm caused by the understanding is to do what whoever finds a clock that is running too fast does. In order to set it right one must first stop it. So the first remedy for our understanding is to stop it, since it is a clock that runs by discoursing about things that are not and that never will be. And, even if they were, it is not up to the understanding to judge them or go after them. It is necessary to stop it so that it stays in the present moment, considering presently the kindness of the Lord and the ingratitude with which we sometimes receive it. When constantly thinking about our acts we should consider what we could lose in each of them. If we do not close ourselves to God with other thoughts we will see how God is

given to us in each moment. Oh, my dear, if you just left behind your thoughts and movements in order to let the Holy Spirit move you, without running fast or slow, how perfect would be the clock! May His divine compassion be with you.

***Spiritual Treatise On Prayer***<sup>23</sup>

*Perseverance in Prayer*

Many of us cease to persevere in prayer because of the distress and exhaustion that we experience. This can be a result of discouraging and fatiguing the understanding, forcing it through steps and meditations, thinking that if everything is not perfect all effort will be lost. In this case it would be appropriate to say to the Lord what Peter said when fishing: 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing' (Luke 5:5). To avoid this inconvenience we can do the following when entering into prayer.

Those who want to recollect themselves in prayer must become like labourers returning home: feet, tired from walking, hands, from digging; bodies, drained by the day's work. They can only rest by leaving their tools behind, sitting down with their hands doing nothing, accepting a gentle moment of respite. In such a way whoever desires to enter the state of prayer must come home, tired from the works of the senses, exhausted from so much talking and so much looking and hearing in vain, afflicted by the understanding, and crushed by the appetites of the will ....

Tired I come, O Lord, but you became tired on the road so that I would be at ease. You wanted to be rest and serenity for us, give me the grace that I would be able to say: 'I will both lie down and sleep in peace' (Psalms 4:8). I have come to rest from the labours that Pharaoh forced me to do in Egypt. Because of them I am crushed, without feet, hands, or understanding. I am in need of having your mercy restore what my malice destroyed, in need of having you become my feet and my hands, the light of my understanding and the joy of my will. I will do what you work in me and say what I hear from you. In this way what I have done to hurt myself you will turn it into my benefit. It would be better to have you as my feet and my hands, serving you in

<sup>23</sup> Borja, 'Tratado espiritual de la oración', 329–331.



what is my duty, than doing whatever comes from my free will, because everything that I do and everything I have received belongs to you ....

*Juan Miguel Marín* is a DTh. candidate at Harvard Divinity School, specialising in the history of Christianity. Originally from Puerto Rico, he attended Tufts University and later Harvard, from which he received his MTS and MDiv. degrees. He is currently writing a dissertation entitled 'Firestone of Divine Love: Erotic Desire in Hispanic Jesuit Mysticism'. His two most recent articles, 'A Lucan Kenosis? Luke's Concept of Truth as an Ethics of Service' and 'Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*' have been published, respectively, in the *Journal of Scripture and Philosophy* and *Harvard Theological Review*. His essay 'A Jesuit Mystic's Feminine Melancholia: Jean-Joseph Surin (1600–1665)' was chosen to appear in *Best of the Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spiritualities*.

## TERESA OF AVILA AS STUDENT AND TEACHER OF THE DIONYSIAN TRADITION

*Juan Miguel Marin  
Harvard Divinity School  
Cambridge, Mass.*



hen Teresa of Avila was canonized in 1622, Pope Gregory XV recognized her as an inspired author who “through works of mystical theology, and other treatises full of piety”<sup>1</sup> moved others towards eternal joy.

Pope Gregory is here acknowledging St. Teresa’s place in the centuries-old tradition of mystical theology, a tradition that was traced back to the author then known as Dionysius the Areopagite.

Yet the pontiff sets her apart, as a “woman without letters,”<sup>2</sup> from her male predecessors who, through their learning, were able to convey the hidden wisdom disclosed by Dionysius. He says the following about Teresa’s works: “The doctrine of these books, as can be seen by their eminence, eminence as held by public and commonplace reputation, was not learned or taught by human activity, but infused by God by means of prayer.”<sup>3</sup> While Teresa did see herself as having gained knowledge from “experience” (*experiencia*), a term to which this study shall return, she also conceived of her practice as standing within the tradition of mystical theology, a tradition of prayer that she studied and taught, albeit in an unconventional way.

Teresa will be presented here as a student and teacher in the lineage of Dionysius, today known as Pseudo-Dionysius. In this

<sup>1</sup> “Eritis de Mystica Theologia, aliisque etiam multa pietate refertis libellis.” Gregory XV, *Omnipotens sermo Dei*, quoted in Tomas Alvarez, *Estudios Teresianos* (Burgos: Editorial Monte Carmelo, 1995) 687.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

essay “Dionysius” will refer, not directly to the author scholars study today, but to the author of the *Mystical Theology* as he was understood in the medieval and early modern periods. This study will show that Teresa’s self-education allowed her to continue a process of transmission and transformation of the Dionysian heritage that began in the Middle Ages and reached its highest peak in sixteenth century Spain. This will be done by discussing some books published in Spain during the first decades of the 1500s that were popular in Teresa’s environment. These texts have rarely been studied by contemporary scholars and no English translations have yet appeared. The second half of this essay will employ a few historical vignettes to show how Teresa became a teacher of this Dionysian tradition for later mystical writers, who found in her a point of departure for their own mystical treatises.

*Teresa as Student of the Dionysian Tradition*

In the first chapter of Teresa’s *Life*, there is a sentence that could easily be passed over without much notice, yet it marks a crucial point in Spanish history that would affect tremendously the development of Christian spirituality. Telling of her childhood in early 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain, she mentions that her “father had the avocation of reading good books, so he had them in romance [Spanish] so that his children could read them” (*Life* 1,1).<sup>4</sup> The “good books” to which Teresa refers are spiritual writings that for the first time were being translated from Latin or even being written in the vernacular. When the availability of texts in Spanish was combined with the increase in book production brought about by the recently invented press, the result was that laypersons with no knowledge of Latin could have access to Christian writings.

This access created an unprecedented demand for books. The period that includes Teresa’s lifetime, Spain’s “Golden Age,” saw more than 1200 books about Christian spirituality

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<sup>4</sup> All translations from the Spanish are mine unless noted. For Teresa’s work, I am using Santa Teresa de Jesús *Obras Completas*, ed. Tomas Alvarez (Burgos: Editorial Monte Carmelo, 1998).

published.<sup>5</sup> For an inquisitive youngster like Teresa who “without a new book wouldn’t be happy” (*Life* 2,1), the world of learning was within reach in a way that was not possible for women of previous generations. Lacking access to the education reserved for men, she taught herself by reading the books available to her from the personal libraries of her father and the rest of her extended family. As she recounts in the *Life* (3,7) it was her uncle who encouraged her to become an avid reader of spiritual books. An inventory of her father’s goods reveals that among his books were found Greek classical writers and theological treatises on the Mass and the seven sins.<sup>6</sup> By then someone in her family could easily have lent her the very popular *Cartujano*, which later she would recommend to her convent sisters. Published in 1502 as a Spanish translation of Ludolf Von Sachsen’s *Vita Christi*, it actually includes more than the Carthusian’s text. The edition that would have been available devotes several chapters to patristic theology. As will be discussed further, Teresa knew more about Christian theology than she lets her readers know.

It is impossible to know all of the texts she read. What can be done is to explore the most popular and easily available spiritual writings of her time and see how she could have been introduced to a tradition of writings on prayer that traced its origins to the mystical theology of “St. Dionysius.” Once she entered this tradition, a process began which led her to be considered, only years after her death, as a teacher of this mystical theology.

#### *Pseudo-Dionysius’ Mystical Theology*

Throughout the medieval era, Pseudo-Dionysius, known as Dionysius, was known as the author of several works including *The Celestial Hierarchy*, *On Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*. He was identified with St. Paul’s convert at the Areopagus, giving his texts apostolic authority by affiliation. His

<sup>5</sup> Andres Melquiades, *Los Místicos de la Edad de Oro en España y América* (Madrid: B.A.C, 1996) 7.

<sup>6</sup> “Lecturas” in *Diccionario de Santa Teresa*, ed. Tomas Alvarez (Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2002).

coinage of the term “mystical theology” would have a profound influence in Christian thought. Because Dionysius uses the adjective “mystical” in so many ways, it is difficult to know what exactly he meant by the term. A philological approach can only tell the roots of the word, which shed some light. “Mystical” and “mystery” will show up in an etymological dictionary as cognates of the Greek *mustes* (an initiate), and *muein* (to close the eyes), leading to later associations with secrets and hiddenness.<sup>7</sup> At the beginning of the *Mystical Theology*, it is revealed that what Dionysius is disclosing is not appropriate for everyone but only for those who undergo a mystical initiation.<sup>8</sup> He then tells the reader that God dwells in the mystical darkness of unknowing.<sup>9</sup> The other use is in referring to those “mystical summits”<sup>10</sup> where the mysteries of theologies lie in mystical silence and towards which the initiate is to ascend.

Another theme that plays an important role in the Dionysian tradition is that of negative theology. Following the discussion of what is mystical, Dionysius moves into affirmative and negative theologies, where the latter supersede the former. God is more appropriately approached by saying what God is not than by affirming what he is. This approach will lead the initiate “toward union (*henosis*) with him who is beyond all being and knowledge.”<sup>11</sup> This mystical union is described as being achieved through erotic ecstasy: “Eros is eminently a power of unifying, binding, and joining. Moreover, the divine eros is ecstatic; it does not permit lovers to be among themselves but binds them to be among their lovers.”<sup>12</sup>

Erotic language is used by many mystical theologians in the medieval period to describe a way of relating to God through

<sup>7</sup> *American Heritage Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 2000), 1164.

<sup>8</sup> I will use two translations: Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names and Mystical Theology*, trans. John D. Jones (Madison: Marquette University Press 1980) and *Pseudo Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), indicating each time which translation I am using. This reference is to Jones, 1000B, 212.

<sup>9</sup> Jones, 1000D, 214.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 998A, 211.

<sup>11</sup> Luibheid, 1000 A, 135.

<sup>12</sup> Jones, 711D-712<sup>a</sup>, 144.

love rather than knowledge.<sup>13</sup> When women developed their own mystical theologies, it was often the case that they would use the path of love, which many contemporary scholars associated with a particularly female way of knowing.<sup>14</sup> While this association is very useful in recovering the women mystics, exceptions such as Teresa's complicate the generalization. Even in the medieval period, a paradigmatic female mystic, and possible inspiration for Teresa, Gertrude of Helfta,<sup>15</sup> would show awareness of the scholarly mystical tradition that began with Dionysius. As Michel de Certeau states:

Beginning in the thirteenth century, a new wave brought the high thoughts of the Oriental contemplator to the "West." It produced such rapture that, by the end of the century, Jesus Christ himself, in the *Exercitia Spiritualia* by Gertrude d'Helfta (d. 1301), sometimes began to speak as Dionysius did.<sup>16</sup>

The subtle connection between women's mysticism and a Dionysian lineage that has often been restricted to scholarly male mystics has yet to be explored. It may be seen that Teresa also sometimes spoke as Dionysius did. This can only be explained if she had knowledge of those works in Spanish that, in the sixteenth century, were attempting to popularize the kind of spirituality associated with the Areopagite.

#### *Spanish Mystical Theology*

Spanish *mística teología*, the definition of which varies slightly from author to author, can be said to begin in 1500 with the publication of Benedictine abbot Cisneros' *Exercitatorio de*

<sup>13</sup> See Daniel de Pablo, *Amor y Conocimiento en la Vida Mística* (Madrid: Espirituales Espanoles, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> For a study of the appropriation of women mystics by twentieth century French scholars, see Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> I discuss Gertrude of Helfta's influence on early modern Spanish mysticism in Juan Marin, "Heterosexual Melancholia and Mysticism in the Early Society of Jesus," *Theology and Sexuality*, January 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 102.

*la Vida Espiritual*, a distillation of the wisdom of church fathers including Pseudo-Dionysius.<sup>17</sup> The *Exercitatorio* is Cisneros' Spanish paraphrase of spiritual sources for those without much education. It was composed in the "vernacular, because [his] intention was to make it [available] for the simple and pious and not for the arrogant and educated."<sup>18</sup> Influenced by the Dionysian views of Hugh of Balma, to be discussed in depth below, and others, he takes the side of those who argue that God can be attained through love without the need for knowledge. It was Cisneros' take on mystical theology, as showing the way to God through love rather than knowledge, that set a precedent for the development of Spanish spirituality. The apostolic authority for his approach is based on Dionysius.

As St. Dionysius states, this wisdom is known through ignorance. No human reason or understanding or knowledge leads the exerciser to such union. There, where only the affection of love reigns, sense and understanding have nothing to do.<sup>19</sup>

Cisneros and subsequent authors take Dionysius to privilege desire over cognition. In Cisneros, sense and understanding are obscured by what Dionysius described as the "dark cloud" that surrounded Moses who, "desiring to speak with God, entered the dark cloud, representing that whoever wants to attain the love of God should enter this dark cloud. Without seeing or understanding, [it] will make him forget the things that belong to this world."<sup>20</sup> Cisneros' approach to Dionysius is not speculative but practical. His book is not a theological treatise in the modern sense, but a guide to exercises by which the "high wisdom" described by Dionysius can become available to anyone, even if one is a "farmer or old lady."<sup>21</sup> This democratization of what Pseudo-Dionysius restricted to initiates would pave the way for

<sup>17</sup> For a study in English of the *Exercitatorio*, see Terence O'Reilly, "The Structural Unity of the *Exercitatorio de la Vida Espiritual*" in *From Ignatius Loyola to John of the Cross* (Aldershot, U.K.: Variorum, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> García Jiménez de Cisneros, *Obras Completas*, Vol. II (Barcelona: Montserrat Abbey 1965) 454.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

women in early modern Spain to be able to participate in this tradition.

When discussing Dionysius, Cisneros invites the exercitant to think about the God that the Areopagite describes:

In this way think that this one who in love you seek is endless, unfigureable, innumerable, uncircumscribable, immutable, unimaginable, but always desirable. Also think that this one whom you love is not demonstrable, indefinite, opinable, estimateable, investigateable, intelligible, but always desirable.<sup>22</sup>

Cisneros knows that Dionysius wrote in the Neoplatonic language that he echoed here in his treatise. Yet he claims that the contemplative state is easier to attain if one uses "mundane love," because "we know better such love and it is more familiar than the divine one."<sup>23</sup> "When one sleeps, in the beloved one dreams; when awake one does not listen or care, or speak about anything else, in a way that one loses reason, and becomes crazy, intoxicates or mad ... Thus mundane love wounds and inflames."<sup>24</sup>

Cisneros sets a precedent in Spanish mysticism with his call to use erotic desire as a way of igniting the soul and helping her in the mystical ascent. It is unknown whether Teresa read Cisneros, but she was to become the most important expositor of his approach. It is known that the Dionysian program that Cisneros started did find a way to reach her, mainly through the work of Francisco de Osuna and Bernardino de Laredo, discussed below, and perhaps Hugh of Balma himself, to which this study now turns.

Fourteen years after Cisneros' guide appeared, printers in Toledo published a book entitled *Sun of Contemplatives, Saint Dionysius' Mystical Theology* by Hugh of Balma.<sup>25</sup> At the time sometimes attributed to St. Bonaventure or St. Dionysius himself, this book would become a crucial link between the

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Hugh of Balma. *Sol de Contemplatiuos* (Toledo, 1514) Houghton Library Typ FC Ek514s.



Dionysian tradition and Spanish spirituality. The leading Spanish historian of this period considered it as important to the development of Spanish mystical theology as Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* was to the development of dogmatic theology.<sup>26</sup> Cisneros used the Latin original *Viae Sion Lugent*, written by Balma at the end of the thirteenth century, to compose his compilation. The Spanish version was a rearrangement and adaptation by Franciscan friar Antonio de Montesinos, who includes some additional comments and eliminates some of the most complex discussions in order to make it accessible to a less educated reader.

The movement towards making accessible the wisdom of Dionysius was the logical next step that those who read Balma took. If, as Balma claims in his book, this wisdom is not reached by learning but by "experience," then it is not necessary to study much but to practice by "experimenting." Experience arises out of practice of the kind of exercises that Cisneros describes. For Balma, "whoever wants to know this spiritual wisdom should know first oneself the truth by experience"<sup>27</sup> and not by thinking. Here Balma is taking sides on the controversy of whether God can be reached without thought as an intermediary. He argues against "those who believe themselves to be know-it-alls and contradict this spiritual wisdom by claiming that the will is never raised to desire without the mediation of thought."<sup>28</sup> The doctrine of reaching God through unknowing and by experience is fundamental to Spanish spirituality. Teresa would find here the certitude of having encountered God even when confronted by those who were more educated than she was.

The emphasis on the authority of experience is similar in Balma and Teresa. Through her practice of prayer, Teresa comes to the conclusion that she has encountered God and not a demonic illusion. Her certainty can be compared to Balma's. In the *Relaciones* she tells of her prayer experience:

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<sup>26</sup>Teodoro H. Martin's introduction to Hugo de Balma, *Sol de Contemplativos* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1992) 9. This edition seems to be out of print, and a catalog search reveals that only one library in the United States owns it. The reader may find one of the early modern editions to be more available.

<sup>27</sup>Balma (1992), 39.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 40.

When I am in prayer, and also in those days in which I am in quiet and my thoughts in God, even if all lettered men and saints that are in the world gathered together and tormented me in ways unimaginable and I wanted to believe it, they would not be able to make me believe that this is demonic. I just cannot ... The next word or recollection or vision would unmake whatever they said. I could not do otherwise than believe that it was God. (*Relaciones* 1.26)

This potentially dangerous attitude is not Teresa's own stubbornness but something in which she finds herself on the side of tradition. Balma says that:

[W]hen the heart is certified by this wisdom of many things that belong to faith, the sweetness is such that, even if all wise men and philosophers of the world said that its faith is not true but delusion, it would only affirm the opposite and claim: It is you who are deluded and only I have the true faith in a more blessed way that can be demonstrated by human reason and proof.<sup>29</sup>

The wisdom described by Dionysius is not one that can be acquired by worldly means but only by divine grace. Teresa's certitude that her experience is not delusional arises from the intensity of her emotional experience, yet it is not extricable from a tradition of thinkers including Balma who, through their study, gained insight on the limitations of such study. Teresa knew that these thinkers belonged to the tradition of mystical theology. As will be shown below, she gave hints to his educated readers so that they would link her claims with the tradition, even when she could not disclose how much of this tradition she had studied. Balma's book may have been among those of her books in Spanish that she tells were burned by the Inquisition (*Life*, 26,5). It is known that she did read Balma's disciples Osuna and Laredo. It is through her contact with these authors,

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

strengthened by her experience, that she would develop her own mystical theology.

In three passages of the *Life*, she used the term “mystical theology,” of which she would claim she had little knowledge so as not to raise suspicions from the Inquisition.

1) ... a feeling of the presence of God that in no way I could doubt that He was inside me or I totally immersed in Him. This was not in the manner of vision; I think it is called mystical theology. The soul is suspended in such a way that everything seemed outside itself. The will loves, the memory seems almost lost, the understanding seems to me not to be discursive, yet not lost; but, as I say, it does not work, but is as if afraid of how much it understands, because God wants it to understand that it understands nothing of what His Majesty shows it (10,1).

2) Whoever had the experience will understand me. I do not know how to say if it is not understandable here. In mystical theology, as I began to say, the understanding begins to lose its workings because God suspends it (12,5).

3) How is this union and what it is I do not know how to make it understood. It is found in mystical theology, the words for which I do not know. I do not understand what is mind, nor what is the difference between the spirit and the soul. It seems to me that everything is one thing. The soul goes out of itself in the manner of a burning fire made flame. Sometimes this fire grows with impetus. This flame rises above the fire, but it is not a different thing, but the same flame that is in the fire ...What I want to say is what the soul feels when it is in this divine union. What is union is now understood, two different things becoming one (18, 2-3).

Here are the first stages of a Dionysian perspective, mediated through Osuna's and Laredo's appropriation of Balma and Cisneros. In their texts, Osuna and Laredo push forward the

Dionysian perspective by giving it an even more apophatic direction.<sup>30</sup> While Cisneros suggests to the exerciser what to think about, in Osuna and later in Laredo the maxim will be *no pensar nada*, do not think of anything. Teresa tells the reader that she found this *no pensar nada* in Laredo's *Ascent of Mount Sion* (23,12). She emphasizes how in mystical theology the discursivity of the understanding stops. The suspension of the understanding involves a process in which it does not work any more, there is no need for thinking. For Laredo, Dionysius' mystical theology involves an "annihilation of the works of the understanding."<sup>31</sup> Likewise, Osuna discusses, near the end of his *Third Spiritual Alphabet*, how to "quiet the understanding."<sup>32</sup> It can be seen that Teresa is here more influenced by Laredo. Unlike Osuna, Laredo links mystical theology with the presence of God and with union. The latter, going back to Pseudo-Dionysius' *henosis*, is developed further by Teresa, who adds a further stage beyond union: spiritual marriage.

Teresa's metaphor for union mentioned above, the flame and the fire, is also mentioned by Laredo. In Teresa, however, it begins to lose the emphasis on difference between the soul and God. In the original passage Laredo states that "love makes of two things one, without their ceasing to be two."<sup>33</sup> The soul is similar to God when they have "one will that is one love in two or between two." His metaphors are the "flame that is consumed in the fire from which it originated and loses from its being everything regarding its 'nomination' (*nominación*)" and the "drop of water falling into the sea, which loses the name of 'drop' and, by virtue of the sea, is now one thing with it." He admits "the comparisons do not fit accurately."

<sup>30</sup> Two studies have already been published on the influence of these two authors on Teresa. See Fidele de Ros, *Un maître de Sainte Thérèse: le père Francois d'Osuna* (Paris: J.Vrin, 1936) and *Un Inspirateur de Sainte Thérèse: Le Frère Bernardin de Laredo* (Paris: J.Vrin, 1948).

<sup>31</sup> Bernardino de Laredo, *Subida del Monte Sión* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2000) 480.

<sup>32</sup> Francisco de Osuna, *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1981) 556.

<sup>33</sup> Laredo, 813ff.

His emphasis on the difference between God and the soul would have to find a better example. In the passage above from the *Life*, Teresa says that "It seems to me that everything is one thing." In the more mature *Interior Castle*, Teresa describes union with a more accurate metaphor that Laredo could have used: "... union is like two wax candles that are joined so closely that their light is one, or that the wick, the light and the wax are one; later you can separate one candle from the other and two candles remain" (*Castle*, "Seventh Dwelling," 2.4).

Teresa then goes beyond union to a final stage where Laredo's metaphors are appropriate. 'Spiritual marriage' is:

... like water falling from heaven in a river or spring, where everything becomes water, no one will be able to divide or separate the water of the river from what fell from heaven. It is like a small stream that enters the sea, there is no way to separate them. It is also as if in a room there were two windows from which light enters, although at first divided everything becomes one light. (2.4)

Teresa elaborates and expands on that union that was first introduced by Dionysius as *henosis*, a union she read about in Osuna. Osuna writes:

Saint Dionysius urges: "Fight strongly to leave the senses and operations of the intellect and all sensible and intelligible things and all that lasts and does not last, and insofar as this is possible, rise up in unknowing to union with the One who is above all substance and knowledge."<sup>34</sup>

Teresa has done this and surpassed the state of union by embracing a mystical marriage in which love dissolves any trace of individual identity that may remain. Dionysian *eros* is now not an abstract concept but a lived reality. Going further than Osuna through her practice of prayer, Teresa has gained "experience," which will allow her to be seen by others not as a student but as a teacher.

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<sup>34</sup> Osuna, 571.

*Teresa as Teacher of the Dionysian Tradition*

In the last decades of the sixteenth century, the Jesuit superiors of the recently founded Society of Jesus were becoming suspicious about a “way of prayer that began to be introduced in the Society, in the province of Castilla, through the spirit and counsel of Mother Teresa of Jesus.”<sup>35</sup> The “strange” way of prayer was being taught by Baltasar Alvarez, who previously had been Teresa’s spiritual director. This “prayer of silence” was considered by many to be too contemplative for a religious order that prided itself in being “contemplatives in action.”<sup>36</sup> Moreover, it was too close to religious practices promoted by heretical groups.<sup>37</sup>

Alvarez was asked to write a defense of this way of prayer, which he began practicing after his encounter with Teresa. In it, he takes refuge in the doctrine of the church fathers, starting with Dionysius.<sup>38</sup> What he does not say in his response is that he was motivated to study the mystical tradition of the Church inspired by his relationship with Teresa. This is known from a recollection by Teresa’s first biographer, Jesuit priest Francisco de Ribera, who remembers discussing spiritual writings with Alvarez:

[V]isiting [Alvarez] once in Salamanca, and the topic of discussion being spiritual books and how beneficial were each one, he said: “I read all these books to understand Teresa of Jesus”... Father Baltasar Alvarez had knowledge and experience about spiritual matters, but Mother Teresa of Jesus soared so high that one had to hurry in order to catch up with her.”<sup>39</sup>

Ribera realized that what was supposed to be a relationship as spiritual director was a link to the mystical tradition. Ribera’s

<sup>35</sup> Baltasar Alvarez, *Escritos Espirituales* (Barcelona: Claraso, 1961) 150.

<sup>36</sup> For the spirituality associated with this phrase, see Joseph Conwell, *Walking in the Spirit: A Reflection on Jeronimo Nadal’s Phrase “Contemplatives Likewise in Action”* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> See Pedro Santonja, *La Herejía de los alumbrados y la espiritualidad en España del siglo XVI* (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 2001).

<sup>38</sup> Alvarez, 212.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

is not the only testimony to this change in teacher-disciple relationship. One of the sisters, Isabel of Jesus, recalls how Father Alvarez was skeptical of Teresa's visions of Jesus Christ, questioning her how could she be so sure that it was Him. It was not until he himself had a vision of Christ that he began to understand Teresa. Isabel remembers the next meeting between them, describing the encounter with Teresa, bringing humor to her relationship with him now as disciple:

The next morning he came to visit and tell her what he had seen. She answered: Do not believe it, Father. Christ would appear to you, Your Paternity? It could not be Christ. Think about it. And he gave all the reasons why he knew it was the Lord himself. To which she answered: Well, father, just like that is the way it seems to Your Paternity, that is the way it seems to those who come to speak with you."<sup>40</sup>

Even after being educated for several years, Alvarez was not prepared to become a spiritual director. This episode leads him to acknowledge that there are other more important things that could only be learned through experience. In his response to his superiors he claims that "only those who have the experience will know how to feel"<sup>41</sup> what Dionysius teaches in his *Mystical Theology*.

What Alvarez learned from Teresa was not going to be popular. Another factor was that several Jesuit superiors were afraid that "if this affective prayer continued to spread, some cases of 'visionarism' or madness" would be produced.<sup>42</sup> This veiled reference to Teresa was made explicit when Jesuit general superior Mercurian ordered Alvarez "not to spend time with women, especially not with Carmelite nuns, either by visiting or writing letters."<sup>43</sup>

Teresa's teaching was spreading and not only among convents. Her influence was such that at the beginning of the

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<sup>40</sup> Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Otger Steggnik, *Tiempo Y Vida de Santa Teresa* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1996) 168.

<sup>41</sup> Alvarez, 228.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

seventeenth century the process towards her official recognition as a teacher of mystical theology could not be avoided. Her teaching had to be shown to be part of the Roman Catholic church or it risked creating havoc by fueling the spirituality of dissident groups.

The most influential person in promoting Teresa as teacher in the Church's mystical lineage was her inseparable colleague in her later life, Jerónimo Gracián. Gracián was the one that asked Teresa to write the *Moradas*, knowing well that it could be used as a resource in the teaching of prayer. After Teresa's death, Gracián went on to become an influential teacher of the mystical tradition, following the lineage being discussed. His own *Mystical Theology* is a re-translation of Hugh of Balma's work. His *Dilucidario* is not only a commentary on Teresa's *Moradas*, but also an extensive history that traces the development of the mystical tradition by naming dozens of women who have left their mark in the teaching of spiritual matters since the time of Dionysius.

Not only is his the first book that presents Teresa as a teacher, but it is here where the myth of Teresa as uneducated teacher begins:

[S]ome say that she uses terms that are not appropriate or adequate, such as naming ecstasy "union" or rapture "mystical theology" and so on. They also say that this interchanging of scholarly terms can harm those who read them and lead into doctrinal error. It is the case that it is not her fault, she did not know any better as she had no education. ... [Yet] some souls that follow prayer and the spirit will easily benefit from books written by experience.<sup>44</sup>

Gracián had the best intentions in mind; this was the only way his companion would gain the reputation she deserved. It is thanks to Gracián's work that Teresa was recognized as being a successor to Dionysius and other church fathers, but only at the

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<sup>44</sup> Jerónimo Gracián, *Obras* (Burgos: Tip. de "El Monte Carmelo." 1932-33) vol. 2, 14.



price of separating her from the male writers by according her a special place outside the community of learning.

Once Teresa was canonized, a door was opened for those who would find in her the best of what the Dionysian heritage had to offer. Several works on mystical theology were inspired by the Carmelite's writings. Among these is the *Firestone of Divine Love*, a commentary on Dionysius written by Peruvian Jesuit priest, Antonio Ruiz de Montoya.<sup>45</sup> His treatise was intended to teach his religious brothers about mystical prayer. Since Teresa's style is more pedagogically successful than Dionysius' abstruse philosophy, what Montoya begins as an elaboration of the *Mystical Theology* he concludes as a commentary of Teresa's *Moradas*.

Dionysius' neoplatonic language dominates the introductory chapters of the *Firestone*. Montoya addresses God as First Cause, discussing the divine "potencies" (*potencias*) or powers that are present throughout creation. These potencies, when present in human beings, become the faculties that allow humans to relate to created beings. God, however, is to be found beyond creation; these faculties must be temporarily negated in order to transcend being and attain union with God. Dionysius would then be teaching that God "cannot be reached through the exterior senses."<sup>46</sup>

In Teresa, Montoya finds imagery that can convey better what Dionysius intended. He is also aware that she can combine her own images with the scholarly terms that Gracián claimed she did not know. He mentions Teresa's "small heaven,"<sup>47</sup> referring to a passage in her *Camino de Perfección* where she encourages her fellow nuns to withdraw into themselves, mystical prayer being a better way to approach God than vocal prayer:

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<sup>45</sup> Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, *Silex del Divino Amor* (Lima, Perú: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1991). I discuss Montoya's life and spirituality in Juan Marin, "Antonio Ruiz de Montoya's *Silex del Divino Amor*: Contemplation and Action in the Latin American Frontier," *The Way: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* (forthcoming).

<sup>46</sup> Montoya, 4.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

The soul gathers the potencies and enters into itself with God.... If you can seclude yourself in this small heaven of our souls, where he who made heavens and earth abides, and avoid becoming distracted by exterior senses, then know that your path is excellent and that in a short time you will be able to drink the water from its source. It is as if you took a boat, with good winds the journey ends soon. By land it will take longer. (*Camino*, 28 4-5)

Montoya's Jesuit companions were trained not only in vocal prayer but also in spiritual exercises in which they used sensorial images to recreate scenes from the Gospel. Montoya believed that some were called to a more intimate kind of prayer, that taught by Dionysius and Teresa. Mystical prayer would allow the attainment of God not through the mediation of creatures, but by granting direct access to God, "drinking the water from its source." In prayer, attachment to exterior things can be an obstacle that prevents focusing the mind on God. It is what "Saint Teresa complained about[,] that little butterfly that fluttered around her understanding like around a candle's flame. It impeded her from knowing God and finding the will to love him."<sup>48</sup> Again, it is Teresa's metaphors that allow Dionysius' wisdom to be distilled.

The concluding example is that of another Jesuit, Jean Joseph Surin, a contemporary of Montoya but this time in France, who also found in Teresa the culmination of the lineage of Pseudo-Dionysius. In his own mystical theology, *Spiritual Guide*, he borrows from most of the church fathers yet, with the exception of Paul, no other author is cited as an authority as often as Teresa. His autobiography, *Triumph of Divine Love*, can also be considered a mystical theology, since in it he recounts the mystical experiences that would lead him to write his theology, just as Teresa's *Life* prepared the way for the *Mansions*. Teresa's spiritual presence also permeates the book.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>49</sup> Jean Joseph Surin, *Triomphe de l'Amour Divin* (Grenoble: J.Millon, 1990). For an exploration of the gender issues in the text, see Juan Marin, "A

In these works, Surin felt the need to defend mystical theology from clerical colleagues who dismissed it as the fervid imagination of “little women” (*femmelettes*.)” One of the priests Surin wrote against derided “devout melancholics and mystics” who have their “castle in Spain.”<sup>50</sup> This last reference is an attack on the increasing influence of the writings of Teresa of Avila, who even after her canonization some felt to be too controversial.<sup>51</sup> Surin traces her teaching to Dionysius and later church fathers in order to reiterate the importance of experience in mystical theology. In order to defend those whose spirituality is similar to Teresa’s he claims that ecstatic experiences:

... are not the sweetness gustos of “little women” (*femmelettes*). Many thinking and wise men have contempt for these [experiences] and compare them to the tears and sensibilities of some women. This is something else. These are spiritual experiences, real and efficacious, that hearten the soul, a demonstration of God and divine things. Truly they are much more than sweetnesses.<sup>52</sup>

Teresa’s authority was challenged, so he has to affirm that the hidden divine things that Dionysius described have been demonstrated by God through the experiences of women. Dionysius’ way of denying knowledge and letting desire be what moves one toward God is implied when Surin claims that it can be found implicit in the mystical tradition that “a simple *femmelette* can love God more than the greatest doctor in the world.”<sup>53</sup>

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Jesuit Mystic’s Feminine Melancholia,” *Journal of Men, Masculinity, and Spirituality*, January 2007.

<sup>50</sup> Jean Cheron, *Examen de la Theologie Mystique* (1657), quoted in Michel de Certeau’s *Introduction to Jean Joseph Surin Guide Spirituel* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1963) 45.

<sup>51</sup> For an account of her influence in seventeenth century France, see Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>52</sup> Surin, *Triomphe*, 325.

<sup>53</sup> Surin, *Guide*, 226.

In Surin's autobiography, Dionysius' darkness of unknowing is refracted through Teresa's own experience of darkness. For twenty years, Surin was afflicted by depression, which he attributed to demonic possession and abandonment by God. His depression was most intense on the feast day of St. Teresa. He would feel at the "entrance of ancient darkness," recalling Teresa's vision in her *Life* (32, 1) of the "entrance of a long and strait tunnel ending in a deep, dark, and narrow oven." In that place "there was no light but only obscure darkness." For Surin, as for Teresa, this darkness is not the ultimate stage. Surin understands Teresa's teaching as showing that joy and peace wait at the end of the mystical itinerary. Surin's own depression would end through the intervention of Teresa:

His frailty was extreme, yet nevertheless he was as if elevated in spirit. He saw in front of him, written in the air with large letters, the words PURE LOVE. Beside them was written: TERESA OF JESUS. At that moment he thought that St. Teresa was present, as if she had come from the heavens, which seemed to be opening, a clearing that forestalled the thunderstorm.<sup>54</sup>

Teresa then became his guide through mystical darkness, and it is her spirit that would pervade Surin's teachings when he later wrote the *Spiritual Guide*. Surin now wrote to teach others and found himself in that lineage going back to Dionysius, one into which he was initiated by his teacher, Teresa of Avila.



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<sup>54</sup> Surin, *Triomphe*, 271.



## Heterosexual Melancholia and Mysticism in the Early Society of Jesus

Juan Miguel Marin

[jmarin@hds.harvard.edu](mailto:jmarin@hds.harvard.edu)

### *Abstract*

In the last decades of the sixteenth century the Society of Jesus prohibited its members the reading of several mystical texts. A theme that cuts across these texts is the use of erotic language to describe the relationship between the soul and God. I argue that what lies behind the prohibition is the fear that desire, especially homoerotic desire, would be a threat to Jesuit identity. I use Judith Butler's concept of heterosexual melancholia to illuminate this episode in Jesuit history.

*Keywords:* Jesuits, heterosexual melancholia, spirituality

Heterosexuality is cultivated through prohibitions, and these prohibitions take as one of their objects homosexual attachments, thereby forcing the loss of those attachments.

... where there is no public recognition or discourse through which such a loss might be named and mourned, then melancholia takes on cultural dimensions of contemporary consequence. Of course, it comes as no surprise that the more hyperbolic and defensive a masculine identification, the more fierce the ungrieved homosexual cathexis.<sup>1</sup>

Sometime at the beginning of the seventeenth century, somewhere in the mission territories of colonial Latin America, a Jesuit priest was teaching his religious brother a way of prayer that would help the younger Jesuit with his sense of spiritual desolation. The older priest, Antonio Ruiz de

1. Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 137, 139.

Montoya, felt that this desolation was a sign that his brother Francisco del Castillo was called to the kind of prayer described by 'mystical theologians'. This prayer method involved a spiritual practice in which a relation with God was often enveloped with the erotic imagery of the biblical Song of Songs. A dialogue between a bride and her bridegroom, the Song of Songs was read by many Christian spiritual writers as describing an encounter between the soul and the divine Beloved. Montoya decided to study these writers in depth when his own ecstatic experiences resonated with those he found in their spiritual texts. Discussing one of these experiences he writes:

It seemed that Christ Our Lord came to me and drew my mouth to his side, which was bleeding. The consolation I felt cannot be expressed in words. This I felt mostly with my senses. He disappeared. I was left so consoled and moved that everything seemed meaningless. I felt so strong a desire to pray that I could not think of anything else.<sup>2</sup>

Montoya is here echoing a Christian mystical tradition where devotion to images of a suffering Christ often led the devotee to an intensely physical encounter with Christ as the beloved. Montoya's experiences incited him to become an avid student of mystical writers, especially Teresa of Avila.

Published in the previous century, Teresa's writings were becoming by Montoya's time models of what mystical theology was all about. The nun's sensual language resonated with his own desires for Christ. He felt inspired to write a commentary on Teresa's *Interior Castle*, which he dedicated to Castillo. In it he describes methods of entering into a space where only God and the soul remain.

When Castillo engaged in the mystical practices described in the commentary, he began to have similar experiences to those of Teresa and Montoya. Like them he also described them in erotic language:

... waking up at midnight, I saw and felt, in an intellectual vision, Christ our Redeemer crucified next to my bed. I felt at the same time in my heart and my will the effects of his presence: great ardor and exultation in my heart, celestial joy and consolation, an anxious and passionate surge and inner impulse to join my soul with Christ Our Lord. My soul knew and sensed a powerful and superior attraction towards his Majesty. His loving violence carried and dragged the soul unifying it with himself like metal to a magnet. ... My soul saw itself in his arms, my body and soul being penetrated by the crucified Christ...<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to miss in this passage the homoerotic element that emerges when Castillo, a male Jesuit, engages in practices that were becoming

2. Arróspide, José Luis Rouillon, *Antonio Ruiz de Montoya: Biografía* (Lima: UNISINOS, 2001), p. 25.

3. Francisco del Castillo, *Un Místico del Siglo XVI* (Lima: Gil, 1960), p. 120.

famous through the influence of a female Carmelite. In fact, this possibility of homoeroticism may have been a contributing factor to the ban, ordered by Jesuit superiors decades earlier, that prohibited Jesuits from reading mystical writers. Had Jesuit and Montoya lived a few decades earlier in the empire's center and not leagues away in the colonies, their spirituality would have been a source of controversy.

The ban occurred in Spain in that specific historical moment when the Spanish Inquisition's persecution of 'sodomites' was at its fiercest point.<sup>4</sup> Here I want to discuss how the homoerotic possibilities of mystical prayer, of which Montoya's and Castillo's spirituality is an example, were a point of tension for their order, the Society of Jesus. As a young religious order, the Society was in the last decades of the sixteenth century struggling to find an identity that would distinguish it from other religious groups. How the Jesuits found this identity in a re-evaluation of the active life as a religious vocation has been studied in detail.<sup>5</sup> Yet no one has paid attention to how the decision to become an exclusively male religious order affected their identity as contemplatives in action. This masculine identification required not only the exclusion of women but also of any homoeroticism that may threaten this masculine ideal. This led to a special case of what Judith Butler calls 'heterosexual melancholy, the melancholy by which a masculine gender is formed from the refusal to grieve the masculine as a possibility of love'.<sup>6</sup> As Butler claims, this masculine heterosexual identity is cultivated through prohibition of homoerotic possibilities. I will claim that an example of this is the proscription on mystical writers for Jesuits. At the same time I will argue that in the case of this episode in Jesuit history heterosexual melancholia becomes more complex. Heterosexuality does not here imply rejecting same-sex desire in favor of an exclusive attraction to the opposite sex. As celibate men, relationships with women were also to be rejected. Heterosexuality would then also require a detachment from anything considered unmanly. Mystical writings, guilty because of their association at the time with women's spirituality, were a casualty of heterosexual prohibition. Yet unlike in the modern and postmodern condition that Butler describes, the late medieval and early modern world in which these Jesuits lived did provide a 'discourse through

4. '1567-1616. The identification of religious heresy with sexual deviance led to the execution by burning of 71 men convicted of *pecado nefando*, anal intercourse with other men, at Sevilla.' Peter Stearns (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of World History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), p. 295.

5. For a detailed account see John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

6. Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, p. 146.



which such a loss might be named and mourned'. Some Jesuits found in mystical discourse a way of mourning the loss of the possibility of homosexual attachments through a relation with a male Christ. I will discuss one example of the kind of discourse that could be found in the mystical texts that were forbidden to Jesuits, Henry Suso's *Wisdom's Watch upon the Hours*. Reading this Dominican friar's text will allow us to see why the censorship of mystical writings supports Butler's claims about heterosexual melancholia. At the same time I will extend Butler's thesis by showing that these writings provided some Jesuits with the space for mourning this loss of homoerotic attachments.

Although it was only years later after it was founded that the Society of Jesus became canonically an exclusively male religious order, Jesuits were assumed to be 'soldiers of God' from the very beginning. The first paragraph of the Society's founding statement, the *Formula* (1540), delineates what is to be expected of men who wanted to become Jesuits:

Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the cross in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and the Church, his spouse, under the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth, should keep in mind that once he has made a solemn vow of perpetual chastity he is a member of a community founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine and for the propagation of the faith by the ministry of the word, by spiritual exercises and the works of charity, and specifically by the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity.

When the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola, and his companions came up with this formula they already had decided that their divinely inspired mission required them to take the three religious vows: poverty, obedience, chastity. We do not know why chastity is the only one mentioned here; the *Formula* was later amended to include the three of them. It does show that issues about desire could not be extricated from their identity. What we do know is that the vow of chastity became an issue when in the Society's all male environment the possibility of homoerotic attachments became apparent.

The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, approved by a Jesuit general congregation in 1558, includes sections describing the vows of poverty and obedience.<sup>7</sup> The vow of chastity is not discussed, but hastily passed over in the section on obedience:

7. *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and their Complementary Norms* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), p. 220.

What pertains to the vow of chastity requires no interpretation, since it is evident how perfectly it should be preserved, by endeavoring to imitate therein the purity of the angels in cleanness of body and mind. Therefore, with this presupposed we shall now treat of holy obedience.<sup>8</sup>

This silence about how to approach sexual desire is replicated in the Society's historical documents. We have only a few personal accounts that elucidate how these desires sometimes surfaced and how they were dealt with. One example is that of one of the founder's companions, Pierre Favre. In his *Memoriale* Favre recalls how, when he was a college student, he was often concerned about sinning against chastity. He writes:

The scruples were over the fear that over a long period I had not properly confessed my sins, which gave me so much anxiety that to get a remedy I would gladly have gone to a desert to eat herbs and roots forever. The temptations that I experienced at that time were over evil and foul carnal images suggested by the spirit of fornication ...<sup>9</sup>

By then he had met fellow student Ignatius, who advised him to go to confession and attend Mass weekly as a preparation for further spiritual exercises. Some years later, after taking the vow of perpetual chastity, he still had strong temptations. So he 'resolved to abstain forever from putting my face close to any young boy or girl for any reason at all, let alone doing so to older people'.<sup>10</sup> Some months before his premature death from a fever he writes about his constant struggle.

I have experienced a revival of my defects so that I am beginning to get to know them in a new way towards a new amendment. I have felt especially that I need a new way of recollection of soul and that for this there is need for me to behave differently ...<sup>11</sup>

I will return to how he addressed his sexual desires, but for now the founder's attitude toward these desires is more important for our topic. Future Jesuits would attempt to forge an identity out of what they considered Ignatius' intention.

Ignatius was described by a personal companion as someone who 'in matters concerning chastity had a most perfect zeal'.<sup>12</sup> He would insist on perfect observance of the vow. Since opportunities for homoerotic attachments were frequent in a male order he could be severe in his

8. *Constitutions*, p. 220.

9. Pierre Favre, *Memoriale* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), p. 65.

10. Favre, *Memoriale*, p. 80.

11. Favre, *Memoriale*, p. 314.

12. Luis Goncalvez da Câmara, *Remembering Inigo: Glimpses of the Life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the Memoriale of Luis Goncalvez da Câmara* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), p. 38.

curtailing of even the possibility of this kind of attachment. Ignatius' chronicler tells us that on one occasion,

[o]ne of the brethren went into the lavatory, and he got ready and undressed himself with less care and more haste than was proper, when someone else, who was already inside, saw him like that, he gave him a spank on the buttocks. This happened before I arrived in Rome. Our Father Ignatius told me about it, and I clearly grasped from the way he told the story that it was nothing more than a prank, but he said that only because of this he had ordered him to be dismissed at once.<sup>13</sup>

As insignificant as we may find the event today, we have to understand that a masculine identity was being formed in these years. In order to establish an identity in which the masculine ideal was constituted not by heterosexual relationships but by being above carnal desires, homosexual attachments had to be forced out as a threat to this ideal.

We find a similar episode involving another Jesuit:

... one day when this Brother was washing the feet of a sick man, he put his hand a little higher than was necessary. The sick man was a foreign Brother, whom he had not known or had any familiarity with previously, which might have given rise to some suspicion that the act was ill intentioned. Nevertheless, as soon as our Father heard of it, he ordered him to be expelled. The fathers came to him and begged him insistently to punish him in some other way, but not to expel him completely. The Father was not willing, but finally, after many requests, he granted them that he should be allowed to make a pilgrimage of 400 leagues ...<sup>14</sup>

Here we find an example of how the early Society struggled to define themselves as chaste celibate men. Ignatius here again attempts to expel resolutely the possibility of homoerotic desire to somewhere outside the community. His companions realize that if this was done Jesuit ideals, such as justice and mercy, would be compromised. Ignatius himself had written earlier of the need for compassion and patience when scandal arose. Ignatius in the *Constitutions* states that 'just as there should not be excessive readiness in admitting candidates, so should there be even less to dismiss them; instead one should proceed with much consideration and pondering in our Lord'.<sup>15</sup> His decision to send the brother in a pilgrimage of 400 leagues is not so much a punishment as a way to avoid malicious gossip.

If it has been necessary to send someone away not so much because of the kind of or number of his sins as to undo the scandal he has given to others,

13. Da Cámara, *Remembering Inigo*, p. 37.

14. Da Cámara, *Remembering Inigo*, p. 38.

15. *Constitutions*, p. 92.

and if he should be a good subject except for this, prudence will consider whether is expedient to give him permission to go to some far-distant region of the Society, without leaving the Society.<sup>16</sup>

Banishment is here an attempt to maintain the semblance of homogeneity, in this case homogeneity of desire. Preserving the exterior image of the Society as heterosexual takes precedence over other concerns. Ignatius is worried about how erotic desire can be an obstacle in the pursuit of the Society's goals. Homoerotic desire is especially dangerous because it could weaken the façade of masculinity that was increasingly harder to sustain.

Having to live under Ignatius' authority, it is not surprising that Favre was constantly plagued by anxiety about his sexuality. His strong desires surface repeatedly in his *Memoriale* and even shape memories about his youth. He remembers how as a young boy he made a vow of perpetual chastity. He believed that after making this vow Christ strengthened him and kept him away from sin, especially homosexual temptation: 'Nevertheless, you took possession of me; you signed me with the indelible seal of your fear. If you had allowed it to be destroyed like other gifts of your grace, should I not have become like Sodom and Gomorrah?' While the biblical texts Favre is probably thinking about, Isa. 1.9 and Rom. 9.29, do not mention sodomy, by this time Sodom and Gomorrah served as allusions to homosexual sin.<sup>17</sup> That Favre alludes to them in an entry discussing his struggles with chastity suggests that his homoerotic desires are particularly strong.

The ungrieved homosexual cathexis that led some Jesuits to take an antagonistic stance towards homoeroticism led Favre to transfigure his longings and find its source in his desire for God. Christ's body will become the refuge where his pain will be assuaged. As he writes:

See, then, and understand the tears the Lord sheds over the coming destruction of Jerusalem and its exceedingly great ingratitude; likewise, those tears he shed on the cross as he breathed forth his spirit. If they do not suffice or if you find yourself needing the shedding of The Lord's blood more than his tears, gaze on his bloody sweat in which the two are mingled together. Besides this, gaze on the flow of blood from all parts of his body as a result of his bonds, the blows, the scourging, and the crowning with thorns – all this for your sake as if you alone existed.

But if these signs still do not move you, go within to his veins and consider how on the cross all of them are emptied of the pure blood of the immolated Lamb.

16. *Constitutions*, p. 98.

17. For a history of the theology of sodomy see Mark Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

If all this is not enough, receive the blood most pure in itself and receive separately the water that flowed from the Lord's side – and with Longinus heal your soul, and do not try to find any greater signs of the divine goodness sufferings borne by his humanity, because, rising from the dead after this, Christ suffers no longer....<sup>18</sup>

Here Christ's body offers him the warmth that he was not allowed to find in other human beings and the possibility of transfiguring suffering into resurrection. His sexual feelings are here placed in a context where all desire is ultimately desire for the divine. He is not bringing a foreign element into Christian spirituality. Contemplating the divine humanity as a way of increasing desire for God is a practice that Favre is borrowing from the Christian mystical tradition. For example, Favre writes how he had been helped in his prayers by reading Gertrude of Helfta's spiritual writings. In Saint Gertrude's texts he would have found passages like the following where the medieval nun wrote of her encounter with Christ:

[my soul] felt that it held within itself the Beloved, installed in the heart, and it rejoiced that it was not without the welcome presence of its Spouse, with his most enjoyable caresses. Offered the honeyed draughts of the following, divinely inspired words, it drank them in with a thirst that could not be satisfied: 'Just as I bear the stamp of the substance of God the Father in regard to my divine nature, so you bear the stamp of my substance in regard to my human nature ... Penetrated to the very marrow by this unifying force, you will become fit for a more intimate union with me.'<sup>19</sup>

Reading medieval mystical texts like this one from Gertrude offered Favre a place where erotic desire was consecrated. Caresses lead to union with Christ, sanctifying in this way a longing that an ascetic perspective would have seen as an obstacle to be overcome.

Although erotic desire was almost suffocated in the early Society, some Jesuits in later generations were becoming attracted to those writings that inspired Favre. Baltasar Alvarez, Teresa of Avila's spiritual director, was moved by the nun's experiences and decided to learn more about other women mystics. One Jesuit who knew Alvarez recalls that in a library while

visiting [Alvarez] once in Salamanca, and being the topic of discussion spiritual books and how beneficial were each one, he said: 'I read all these books to understand Teresa of Jesus.' ... Father Baltasar Alvarez had knowledge and experience about spiritual matters, but Mother Teresa of Jesus soared so high that one had to hurry in order to catch up with her.<sup>20</sup>

18. Favre, *Memoriale*, p. 139.

19. Gertrude of Helfta, *Herald of God's Divine Kindness* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991), p. 117.

20. Gertrude of Helfta, *Herald*, p. 32.

When we read these women mystics we will not be surprised why Alvarez became a lightning rod of controversy when he invited Jesuit novices under his direction to find in these writers a way of kindling their own desire for God. A Jesuit novice under Alvarez would be reading passages like these, from Blessed Angela of Foligno:

while I was standing in prayer, Christ on the cross appeared more clearly to me while I was awake, that is to say, he gave me an even greater awareness of himself than before. He then called me to place my mouth to the wound in his side. It seemed to me that I saw and drank the blood, which was freshly flowing from his side...<sup>21</sup>

...I heard [Christ] telling me 'Thus I will hold you closely to me and much more closely than can be observed with the eyes of the body. And now the time has come, sweet daughter, my temple, my delight, to fulfill my promise to you. I am about to leave you in the form of this consolation, but I will never leave you if you love me...' After he had withdrawn, I began to shout and cry out without shame: 'Love still unknown, why? why? why?' Furthermore, these screams were so choked up in my throat that the words were unintelligible.<sup>22</sup>

Alvarez hoped these words would ignite in these Jesuits a desire for God that could be stifled if erotic desire was seen as an enemy instead of an ally. Angela's love for Christ was not a disembodied spiritual love but an incarnate one. Also incarnate was Gertrude of Helfta's desire. Like Favre, Alvarez would have identified with Gertrude's longing for union in the following passage:

O most dulcet kiss, do not let your bonds pass over me, this speck of dust; may your touch as well as your grasp not spare me until I become one spirit with God. Make me truly experience how great are the delights in grasping you, the living God, my most dulcet love, and in being united with you.<sup>23</sup>

In his own writings Alvarez will join his own longing with that of the women, even to the extent of adopting the role of the bride in a relationship with the male bridegroom:

To the Lord everything speaks and is open to his eyes: my heart, my longings, my goals, my trials, my inner self, my knowledge and my will. It is the eyes of His Divine Majesty that can erase my defects, ignite my desires, and give me wings to fly. He wants the best for me, which is his service, even more than I do...

21. Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), p. 128.

22. Angela of Foligno, *Complete Works*, p. 142.

23. Gertrude of Helfta, *Spiritual Exercises* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1989), p. 80.

This rest is like the sleep that God gives souls in the Song of Songs: 'I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, do not wake or rouse my beloved until it please!' (Sg 2,7). The bride answers: this is the voice of my Beloved, such safe and sweet fruit can only come from his hand. This is the rest promised to those who in toil search for God: 'When I found the one I love, I held him fast, I would not let him go' (Sg 3,4). Embraced by the repose that is the source of all joy, why then be sad?...<sup>24</sup>

Not being able to express his desire in human encounters, Alvarez discovers that the tensions of everyday life can be allayed by finding rest in the arms of a divine beloved. Yet, the spiritual eroticism that we find in this passage was not welcome by Jesuit superiors. Since the language in his writings emerged out of his relationships with nuns Alvarez's superior ordered him 'not to spend time with women, especially not with Carmelite nuns, either by visiting or writing letters...'.<sup>25</sup> Interactions with women are curtailed and so are expressions of homoerotic desire, such as those describing the male Jesuit devotee as the bride of the Song of Songs. The sexuality inherent in this type of prayer is for some Jesuits a threat that must be contained. As a contemporary of Alvarez puts it, describing those who engage in mystical practices:

There are those given to [mental] prayer who, deceived by the devil, believed that they have arrived at the exalted state of the Spirit that is described in the Song of Songs ... and thus the devil transfigured makes these persons believe that it is Jesus who wishes to have that closeness the bridegroom has with the bride and thus things happen that are not fit to be put to paper ...<sup>26</sup>

What is not fit to be put to paper is the erotic element that permeated methods of prayer associated with women. In 1575 a Jesuit community superior complains in a letter to his superior that the Inquisition was arresting women directed by Jesuits. '[Affectivity] is found especially in women and as always they are firm in this affective way. I have found many women on this affective path. I believe that this is the source of scandals and illusions caused by the devil...'.<sup>27</sup> The scandal that he is

24. Baltasar Alvarez, *Escritos Espirituales* (Barcelona: Claraso, 1961), p. 150.

25. Philip Endean, SJ, "'The Strange Style of Prayer': Mercurian, Cordeses, and Alvarez', in Thomas M. McCoog, SJ (ed.), *The Mercurian Project: Forming Jesuit Culture* (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), pp. 351-98 (365).

26. Quoted in Alison Weber, 'Demonizing Ecstasy: Alonso de la Fuente and the Alumbrados of Extremadura', in Robert Boening (ed.), *The Mystical Gesture: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Spiritual Culture in Honor of Mary E. Giles* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 141-58 (153).

27. Ignacio Iparraguirre, *Historia de los Ejercicios de San Ignacio* (Rome: Institutum Historicum, 1955), p. 492.

worried about does not include only fear of being tainted by links with women. Sexuality in prayer could become a basis for rumors about Jesuit masculinity. When the Inquisition investigated women or spiritual deviations, it was also concerned with sodomy.

In Seville, where sodomy persecutions were left to civil authority, a Jesuit active as a prison chaplain between 1578 and 1616 noted the high incidence of sodomy in the religious orders and the diocesan priesthood. He reports the view that Jesuits rarely sin with women because they can so easily find partners among their students or novices.<sup>28</sup>

Regardless of the truth of these rumors, what is important to notice is that homosexual desire was not an occasional source of temptation but a threatening element that could undermine the Jesuits' place in Spanish society. If, as Butler claims above, 'the more hyperbolic and defensive a masculine identification, the more fierce the ungrieved homosexual cathexis' then we can understand why the backlash against 'affective' spirituality occurred. The need to react is reflected in the letter by the Jesuit mentioned above:

These times are so dangerous, that prudence in all these [spiritual] things is necessary. I am very afraid that if the Provincials [superiors] do not insist on the caution that ours must have in their way of proceeding and in their teaching of spiritual things ... the Society will be disgraced.<sup>29</sup>

The hope for reaction was not delayed. The same year the Jesuit superior general ordered mystical texts to be taken away from Jesuit houses.<sup>30</sup> A form of spirituality that was highly regarded by some of the founding Jesuits was now to be stamped out.

Given the historical situation it is no surprise that Henry Suso's *Wisdom's Watch upon the Hours* was on the list of prohibited readings. Suso is explicit about the homoerotic possibilities of the embodied and spiritual self. Like Favre centuries later, as a young boy he experienced attraction not only to girls but to his male friends. He is not reticent about disclosing the passionate desires of his youth.

When in the springtime my blossoming youth and the freshness of my mind summoned me sweetly to the flowering meadows and their blooms of many kinds, so that with fellows of my own age and of either sex I might enjoy the solaces I longed for, many there would sing with resounding, wanton voices as we played our various games. ... they would yield to

28. Mark Jordan, *The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality in Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 126.

29. Iparraquirre, *Historia*, p. 491.

30. For the text of the ordinance see Pedro de Leturia, SJ, *Estudios Ignacianos II* (Rome: Institutum Historicum, 1957), p. 365.



concupiscent madness, and each one would gather what flowers he could. But I for some time hesitated, debating in my mind what I should do; and I saw how those flowers of human flesh, which not long ago were lovely, newly blooming with a vernal beauty, suddenly withered and drooped, and all their beauty perished.<sup>31</sup>

It is not Suso's narration of his longing that would have made his book controversial. Suso's despair here over the transience of objects of worldly desire is but an example of a common motif in spiritual literature, not much of a threat. What may have made Jesuit superiors uncomfortable enough to prohibit the text is that these desires are not only presented as something positive but also as able to bring him to Christ. Embodied desires are not disavowed. Christ himself appears to Suso and tells him, 'because you are a man of desires, I have come to show you the hidden treasure of all that is desirable, the center and the circumference of all that can be longed for, the length and breadth and height and depth of everything that is to be loved'.<sup>32</sup> Everything desirable, including Suso's companions, hides a deeper object of desire. Christ turns out to be the one Suso was longing for. Suso begins an erotic relationship with Christ in which the divine figure, like his youth's objects of desire, can be of either sex. When Suso first met Christ, as the female Eternal Wisdom, he 'thought that here one had a delicate young girl, and then suddenly a most handsome youth was found'.<sup>33</sup> Christ's gender is found to be fluid, oscillating between the feminine Wisdom of the Psalms and the masculine Bridegroom of the Song of Songs. Suso's heterosexual and homosexual desires have not changed their quality, only their object. Yet, while a precedent could have been set in which future religious could explore an erotic relationship with Christ devoid of homoerotic elements, mainly by seeing him as Wisdom, this precedent was never firmly established in early modern practice. In the case of the Society of Jesus, which saw Christ as its standard bearer, only a man could be seen as leader of the Jesuit 'soldiers'. This ironically led to homoerotic attachments to Christ that would then seem threatening to the Society's masculine identity.

Suso himself related to Christ as mostly male. In his most passionate passages, it is Jesus, not Wisdom, who becomes Suso's lover.

'Why are you sad, my soul, and why do you trouble me?' You have been seeking Jesus, and you have found Jesus. Until now you have often com-

31. Blessed Henry Suso, *Wisdom's Watch upon the Hours* (trans. Edmund Colledge; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), p. 116.

32. Suso, *Wisdom's Watch*, p. 118.

33. Suso, *Wisdom's Watch*, p. 77.

plained that your beloved was absent, and when you saw someone else rejoicing in the presence of a loved one, you would envy him and mourn because you could nowhere find him whom you loved. You used to say: O, cruel departure of my beloved, whose memory alone feeds me. he writes letters, he sends messengers, yet he withholds his presence, and with an eye that I cannot see he looks on everything as he looks on me. But alas, this is not enough for a lover. 'In my bed by night I seek him, but I do not find him.'<sup>34</sup>

The beloved's absence can be seen as the despair caused by the loss of human attachments. Only divine love can assuage the pain of having been deprived by social circumstances of the possibility of erotic relationships:

But now my healing, which I no longer hoped for, 'has been seen to arise,' the voice of mourning is changed to one of rejoicing, and the love with which I sought him has become the love with which I give thanks. Then I lamented his absence, now I have seen his presence; and him whom I believed to be afar off I have found close beside me.<sup>35</sup>

Suso offers here an antidote to melancholia. Understanding longing as ultimately longing for the divine can result in the transformation of mourning into joy. Yet this would require accepting eroticism as divine, accepting that Christ can be the bridegroom and the soul the bride. Those who upheld Jesuit identity as masculine and heterosexual would not tolerate this possibility. Anyone who would join Suso in desiring that the celestial spouse 'would go before me in his love, would cherish me, would choose me for his bride would betroth, me with his ring, and would adorn me with many gifts' was to be rejected.<sup>36</sup>

If we study Suso's use of imagery we can see that it mirrors the spirituality of Favre and the missionaries mentioned at the beginning of the essay. Favre and Montoya both find in Christ's blood a powerful symbol of Christ's humanity. Suso, like Favre, longs to find refuge in the divine blood: 'O son of the eternal King, with a most burning love and with the embrace of your whole heart I enfold myself in your arms, stretched out, naked, smeared with blood, and never wishing, living or dead, to be separated from you.'<sup>37</sup> Like Montoya, he longs to drink from Christ's side.

O how grateful I once should have been, If I had been worthy to receive only a single drop of that most precious blood from my beloved's open wounds into my mouth. I should have counted myself happy if I had been

34. Suso, *Wisdom's Watch*, p. 271.

35. Suso, *Wisdom's Watch*, p. 272.

36. Suso, *Wisdom's Watch*, p. 91.

37. Suso, *Wisdom's Watch*, p. 98.

able to take the least falling of that most precious liquid from his breast. But now I begin to ponder most deeply how I have received not merely one drop or two flowing from his hands or feet or breast, for I have rather received the whole of his blood, and his body has been joined to my body.<sup>38</sup>

Suso's inclusion of the body in this spiritual joining we also saw in Castillo who was penetrated by Christ in both body and soul. All these Jesuits adopt a form of prayer for which Suso provides us with a model in which a spiritual seeker adopts a 'feminine' role in a relationship with Christ. When Jesuits imitated this and similar models they undermined the idea of a Jesuit identity as masculine and heterosexual. This is why Suso's text had to be contained as a threat.

Going back to our discussion's opening passage by Butler we find that the events we have been describing can be understood using her framework. We saw how a masculine heterosexual identity was constructed on the basis of excluding a spirituality associated with women that carried within it the possibility of homoeroticism if it was allowed to be practiced by members of a male order. In order to preserve this identity some of the leaders forced out any opportunity for homoerotic attachment, whether human or divine. The persecution that took place both within the Jesuits and at the larger societal level can be understood then as an effect of what Butler suggests is heterosexual melancholia. By severing this connection to women and homoeroticism and refusing to mourn, religious leaders viewed themselves as defending their ideal identity. Yet the ungrieved homosexual cathexis cannot be persecuted away. Butler emphasizes the absence of a discourse that would address a similar loss in our society. In contrast I here suggested that a group of Jesuits found a discourse in mystical theology that allowed them to mourn the loss of human homosexual attachments. Once these attachments are prohibited, homosexual aspirations find refuge in a relation with the divine. These too would be prohibited, but only its outward manifestations would be ultimately censored. Books could be banned but the inner self of mystical practitioners was out of reach.

Butler argues that discussions about identity often do not pay attention to the role desire plays in the constitution of the self.<sup>39</sup> Discussions about Jesuit history have not acknowledged either how issues of gender and sexuality played a role in the development of a Jesuit identity and their communal sense of self. A dialectical interplay can be found in both,

38. Suso, *Wisdom's Watch*, p. 272.

39. For an example see Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

Butler's account of how heterosexual melancholia betrays the need of the rejected homosexual element in order to constitute a heterosexual identity, and in our account of how the development of a Jesuit masculine identity was based on the exclusion of a 'feminine' spirituality. In Butler's argument the refusal to admit this dependence results in violence against the rejected element. 'The effort to annihilate the other is originally motivated by the desire of the initial self-consciousness to present itself as a "pure abstraction" it seeks to break its dependence on the Other...'.<sup>40</sup> Butler sees this movement towards abstraction as a denial of desire so as to become an

identity without corporeal needs. Endeavoring to rid the Other of its determinate life, each self-consciousness engages in an anti-corporeal erotic which endeavors to prove in vain that the body is the ultimate limit to freedom, rather than its necessary ground and mediation.<sup>41</sup>

Those Jesuits who engaged in mystical practices found freedom from melancholia in acknowledging the body as ground and mediation of their encounter with the divine.

The pervasiveness in the Society of Jesus of heterosexual melancholia prevented mystical spirituality from finding more adherents within the order. The struggle towards an identity without corporeal needs led this kind of spirituality underground, only to be recovered by a few Jesuits in the following centuries. The censorship on mystical texts was finally lifted.<sup>42</sup> Yet the identity forged in those tumultuous years under the Inquisition remained in place. Unlike other religious orders, a distinctive Jesuit mystical theology never flourished.

40. Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, p. 51. Although Butler is interpreting in this early work Hegel's argument in the *Phenomenology* it gives us insight into Butler's own later claims in her later work.

41. Butler, *Subjects of Desire*, p. 52.

42. Claudio Acquaviva, 'Claudio Acquaviva to the Whole Society of Jesus, 1590', *The Way* 42.4 (October 2003), pp. 99-104.

## A 16<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit controversy over a “strange” way of prayer

In 1315, a young woman living near a Franciscan monastery described to a neighbor monk how she swallowed Jesus Christ’s foreskin. The *beguina*, a term for a religious laywoman, had been having heavenly visions of a naked Christ together with naked dancers, Franciscan monks and holy virgins. Then, while at Mass on January 1, 1291, she

began to think about the foreskin of Christ, where it may be located. And behold, soon she felt with the greatest sweetness on her tongue a little piece of skin alike the skin in an egg, which she swallowed. After she had swallowed it, she again felt the little skin on her tongue with sweetness as before, and again she swallowed it. And this happened to her about a hundred times. And when she felt it so frequently, she was tempted to touch it with her finger. And when she wanted to do so, that little skin went down her throat...<sup>1</sup>

Agnes expressed some hesitancy in revealing this vision to her scribe. But he had no problem. He gladly welcomed that “the Lord would reveal Himself to her in such a way.” Still, he felt the need to add that Agnes’ sweetnesses, while occurring in her “fleshy nature, were nevertheless not sexual (*libidinosa*).”<sup>2</sup>

In his prologue to a collection of medieval manuscripts (Houghton Library, 25235.21) including Agnes’ text, Benedictine monk Bernhard Pez (1683-1735) defends himself against Jesuit attackers his printing of Agnes’ text. He reminds the reader of other holy devotees of the Holy Prepuce, such as Saint Bridget. But his defense failed. Despite the fact that soon after their foundation in 1540 Jesuits collaborated with monks in the dissemination of medieval women mystic texts, including Agnes’, later Jesuits confiscated almost every copy of the first printed edition of the entire text of Agnes’ *Revelations* (1731).<sup>3</sup> Why such a radical transition?

Here I trace this transition to a Jesuit controversy that erupted in the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In these decades, Jesuit superiors became suspicious of a “strange (*extraño/raro/peregrino*)” way of prayer, one “introduced in the Society, in the province of Castile, through the spiritual teaching of Mother Teresa of Jesus.”<sup>4</sup> Paradigmatic mystic Teresa of Avila found herself sharing with several Jesuits her mystical way of prayer.<sup>5</sup> As we learn in the few studies dedicated to the controversy, in the last decades of the sixteenth century the Society of Jesus (SJ) prohibited its members the reading of several mystical texts. A theme that cuts across these texts is the use of erotic language to describe the relationship between the soul and God.<sup>6</sup> Exemplifying this controversy with Gil Gonzales Dávila (SJ)’s *Pláticas*, “chats” to novices written by the superior in charge of explaining the prohibition, shows that behind the prohibition lies the fear that erotic desire would be a threat to a Jesuit masculine identity. *Jesuits succumbed* to a variant of what early modern scholars have identified as “xenophobia,” that is, a heterodox mystical spirituality became linked with women, foreigners, racial minorities, and those identified by Jesuits and others as *sodomites (sométricos)* “raras personas” *peregrinas*.<sup>7</sup> From Jesuit microcosmos to Hispanic macrocosmos, “xenophobia” links the 1573 edict against mysticism with the 1599 decree against the admission of racial minorities, the de-emphasis on the importance of women's ministry, and the condemnation of erotic interpretations of bridal language as potentially moving Jesuits too close to feminized racial undesirables.



*“Doctrinis variis et peregrinis nolite abduci.”*

*Latin Vulgate, Heb.13:9.*

*“Singularitas est vitium quo dimissis utilioribus homo  
convertit studium suum ad doctrinas peregrinas et insolitas.”*

*Jean Gerson.<sup>9</sup>*

*“... confesando que aquella doctrina [mystica] contenia cosas altisimas y verdaderisimas, solo porque era nueva y peregrina la proscriben y condenan con edicto público. Debemos la noticia a Juan Gerson, Cancelario de Paris.”<sup>10</sup>*

*-Juan Pablo Forner*

*A strange (peregrino) way of prayer has been introduced in the Society, in the province of Castile, through the spiritual teaching of Mother Teresa of Jesus.”<sup>11</sup>*

*Gil Gonzales Dávila SJ*

If we join Ulrike Wiethaus in translating *libidinosa* not as “lustful” but as “sexual,” are we guilty of projective anachronism and lack of historicism, two serious post-Foucauldian scholarly sins?<sup>12</sup> What about if we read Agnes’ *Revelations* through the lens of medievalists like Amy Hollywood and Karma Lochrie? In her article “That Glorious Slit: Irigaray and the medieval devotion to Christ’s side wound” and “Sexual Desire, Divine Desire or Queering the Beguines,” Amy Hollywood joins other medievalists who have “turned to texts by and/or about women to uncover homoerotic possibilities within the metaphoric structures of their writings or in the practices ascribed to women or female characters within literary and religious documents.”<sup>13</sup> In the former she follows Karma Lochrie’s “Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies,” specifically, her reading of Christ’s side wound as vaginal, one of several possible queerings of mystical texts by late medieval women who appropriated Christian erotic imagery, especially that provided by allegorical readings of the biblical Song of Songs, to describe their relationship to God in erotic terms.<sup>14</sup> These women were able to undermine the prescriptive heterosexuality in

which they lived by subverting male-female binaries through linguistic practices such as ascribing traditionally feminine attributes to Jesus the bridegroom. In the latter Hollywood insists “[n]o matter how implausible it might seem to us to understand Christ’s side wound as a bloody slit that feminizes and eroticizes his corporeality, this is in fact what some medieval women (and men) did.”<sup>15</sup> Should we queer Agnes when she gets drunk, immersing herself in the “sweetness of that divine honey that makes all earthly sweetness taste like vinegar?” Even some sympathetic readers of Hollywood and Lochrie readers remain skeptical.<sup>16</sup>

“If the beguines are indeed queer ancestors, then they are bleary and slightly embarrassing ones, like aunts who have become drunk at Christmas.”<sup>17</sup> At least that’s how Susannah Cornwall sums up much medievalists scholarship in her *Controversies in Queer Theology*. Nevertheless the controversy over beguines sexuality is not new. Jean Gerson (1363 – 1429), chancellor at the University of Paris condemned monks copying beguines’ books, encouraging those who chastised the women in their charge.<sup>18</sup> He cites approvingly one who derided “foolishness in public by celebrations, dancing, leaping about and such practices. [And their] devotion [which] is a wine full of fumes, meaning one that generates lecherous behavior, concerning which the apostolic prohibition could be accepted in a mystical sense: Do not get drunk in wine for in there is debauchery.”<sup>19</sup> If there’s nothing strangely queer about Christ’s wound (Fig.1), then how should we interpret Gerson’s many treatises warning about indecent books (*libris impudici*) that not only misread the Song of Songs but include lascivious images (*lascivas imagines*)? “Oh unspeakable horror! .... Impious mothers initiating boys ... [into] the most obscene (*obscenissimis*) gestures and practices ... as those of Sodom and Gomorrah!”<sup>20</sup>

J.M. Lee’s “Shameless and Naked Images”: Obscene Badges as Parodies of Popular Devotion” and J. Van Engen, “Multiple Options: The World of the Fifteenth-Century Church,”



discuss these and other images in relation to Gerson's 15<sup>th</sup> century world.<sup>21</sup> Lee studies "pilgrim [peregrino] badges" and reads them as parodies, thus upholding a religious/profane distinction that Van Engen and others find untenable. I lean towards the latter. As Van Engen asks "how did individuals sort their way through a world where the sacred and the profane so completely overlapped? Did they know at appointed times to turn firmly from Carnival to Lent?"<sup>22</sup> At least some devotees did not separate religion from sexuality even to the point of seeing the medieval devotion to images of Christ's wound (Fig. 1) as devotion to a vagina (its image above ritually carried in procession by a cadre of penises (Fig.2), one of many rituals believed to be carried out in unholy places (Fig. 3)) or to a holy phallus tree (Fig. 4)." Gerson discusses all of these images.<sup>23</sup> He did not dream them up.

In his *History of Sexuality* classic, and in his lectures published as *Abnormal*, Foucault himself pinpoints a transition in mystical theology with Gerson, specifically as integrated with his proposed continuum between late medieval spirituality and modern sexuality.<sup>24</sup> Foucault does not demur from speaking about medieval *sexualité* when discussing attitudes as expressed in Gerson's manual *Mollities* or Jesuit spiritual exercises.<sup>25</sup> I add here the Jesuit superior Gil Gonzales Dávila who, in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century turned to Gerson's authority when he got sick of young Jesuits telling him: "Father, we do not deal with sins anymore, they're of little benefit, all you need is love, love!"<sup>26</sup>

Dávila often reminded Jesuit novices how former soldier St. Ignatius of Loyola repented of his sinful, promiscuous life and turned to a life of prayer inspired by Gerson's "little Gerson (*Gersoncito*)."<sup>27</sup> Once Dávila asks the above young "soldiers in training," about their weapons.<sup>28</sup> Not waiting for an answer he gave one he often received. "I have several notebooks, very nice ones; gotten through smugglings which Your Reverence knows nothing about."<sup>29</sup> Dávila shows

them he's aware of a secret contraband of prohibited texts among their school *cartapacios*, home-made books consisting of several loose folios tied up with strings. What was this forbidden contraband?

We know the contraband had something to do with the Jesuit Institute. As early as the 1560s Dávila warned about those who “seek doctrines or imaginations which we read elsewhere in another book.”<sup>30</sup> By another book, he meant any other than the Jesuit institution Formula above and its companion foundation text, Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. Dávila reminded the young Jesuits that the Institute defined the Jesuit vocation as follows:

Whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God beneath the banner of the cross in our Society, which we desire to be designated by the name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and the Church, his spouse, under the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth, should keep in mind that once he has made a solemn vow of perpetual chastity he is a member of a community founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine...<sup>31</sup>

By then, no official interpretation existed, yet he complained many were approaching Jesuit spirituality through the lens of smuggled texts. They “hide them in their notebooks, seeking doctrines in I don't know which book [so] when it comes to prayer we must destroy this poison.”<sup>32</sup> So what was this textual *pharmakon*?

We can find in Gerson's sermons warnings about how “the Devil, in order to deceive people more cleverly, has mingled honey with venom.”<sup>33</sup> Early modern polemicists repeated such warnings, an example given recently in this journal. In the latter case the deceitful one are not mystics but a new heretical spirituality, i.e. Protestantism.<sup>34</sup> So perhaps Gerson's can help us

identify the nature of our textual poison by identifying its antidote. Or perhaps Dávila already did it for us. And it certainly is not honey.

In his chats with novices, Dávila admits that a Jesuit life lived according to Jesuit spiritual exercises can be a

...purgative life, of mortification and exercises, which on their own are bland but if you join them with prayer become easy and tasteful. As I say, the Society teaches homely prayer, suited to man's nature, not illuminations, fantasies and silences. If someone finds honey, warn him: don't eat much or you could get nauseated, don't get carried away by smoke and mirrors, don't be ruled by feelings ... straighten him up and guide him away from the crooked path, for the devil often becomes an angel of light and often brings man to great perdition. You know what else? Learned and Catholic men ... have spoken so inappropriately of these things that they've become suspect, and their books forbidden. Thus, Gerson reprehends this in his book against Ruusbroec: "You took the flower from its root into your hand, it decayed and lost its beauty..." Of what benefit is those unions in Tauler? If he understood them I do not know. Neither I know what he meant by abyss, annihilation and union without intermediary ... Gerson is among the most solid teachers of the path of spirit and he says: do not read those (*esos*) books.

By "Ruusbroec" and "Tauler" Dávila refers to texts edited by Jesuits of the previous generation, texts written by beguine authors or their spiritual advisors, both texts being in fact collections of mystical miscellanea such as Agnes Blannbekin's.<sup>35</sup> While Gerson often called for spiritual discretion/discernment (*discretio*), in a vernacular "Ruusbroec" Jesuit novices could read a beguine calling for the need of "discretion in everything except in loving."<sup>36</sup> That is, they could until Jesuit superiors called for mystical texts to be put had "under lock and key." As we read in

the official prohibition, mystical writings by authors such as Ruusbroec and Tauler were prohibited ~~not~~ because they were bad” but because they were incompatible (*non convenire*) or alien (*alienus or ajenus*). Dávila adds that ~~the~~ *Institute*’s rules help in *discretion/discernment* (*discreción*) of spirit, because they serve in the discernment of which spirits are proper and which are alien (*ajeno*), which are domestic and which are strange (*peregrino*), which adulterated (*adulterino*) and which are true, which are ours and which are foreign (*de fuera*).” Above and elsewhere he has no problem expressing his animosity, some of which is lost in translation. His use of ~~esos~~ (those)” in *those* unions, *those* books, can indicate in Spanish a self-distancing from something far away from the speaker. Who those ~~esos~~ others, whether books or, as we will see, people, turn out to be both suggestive and revealing.

Dávila refers to Gerson’s ~~book~~ against Ruusbroec,” letters revised and integrated in Gerson’s *On the Examination of Doctrine*, all of them included in Gerson’s multi-volume *Opera*, published in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Gerson wrote *On the Examination of Doctrine* in order to remind readers not ~~to~~ be seduced by strange, different doctrines (*doctrinis variis et peregrinis nolite abduci*).<sup>37</sup> By *peregrinis* Gerson means alien, foreign, relating it to *peregrinus*, the alien, foreign, pilgrim that comes from abroad to visit holy places close to home. Many of these letters were presented at the Council of Constance, where he famously argued against mystical women, most famously failing to revoke the canonization of the most faithful defender of Holy Foreskin devotion, the pilgrim saint Bridget of Sweden.<sup>38</sup> He wonders whether beguines’ ~~new~~, strange (*peregrinas*) doctrines mixing new, strange (*extraños*)” terms, with traditional doctrines of the schoolmen are produced by ~~libido~~.”

Similarly, for Dávila above, if someone finds honey he could easily get nauseated, becoming ruled by libidinous feelings. It seems then this happened to the saint he knew as ~~la~~

Peregrina,” pilgrim Bridget of Sweden and the other learned and Catholic men who spoke so inappropriately of these things that they’ve become suspect, and their books forbidden.” They and many women had their revelations examined by the judgment of learned men, such as those of Saint Bridget, which passed examinations at the Council of Constance.” So orthodoxy is not the problem. The problem lies

in having the skill necessary to cast out the drunkards and the shameless, whoever does not know medicine cannot heal. As Gerson wrote, based on his own vast experience, in *De Pueris ad Christum Trahendis*, *De Arte Audiendi Confessiones* and *De Peccato Mollitei*, in the case of the young and in the case of women, such skills are of utmost importance. <sup>39</sup>

Here Dávila seems to join Gerson in warning young males and all females of the dangers of becoming what we could call “beguine drinking buddies.” He would not be the only one. Dávila shares worries with a contemporary, popular author Horozco y Covarrubias, who also worried about those cherishers of “strange (*particulares*) revelations such as those of St. Bridget [dangerous] due to the intimacy (*familiaridad*) if one dare say (*si se sufre dezir*) of Christ with them.”<sup>40</sup> So we should ask, is there a relation between the popular Spanish translations of Gerson’s books, specially those Dávila mentions above on the spiritual care of young males and women, and the even more popular translations of mystical texts, such as St. Bridget’s? <sup>41</sup>

Dávila’s attitudes towards women about affectivity can exemplify for us at least one early modern Hispanic concept of gender (*género*). Following Gerson, the Jesuit superior claims:

Even if supposedly you have no sensual movements (*movimientos sensuales*) and you are so well known in town that no one suspects anything bad about you, are you sure that’s also the case with the woman you minister to? ... It happens. It may begins well

and end up really bad. Women will slowly, badly, become affectionate (*venirse a aficionar*) to their confessors, for this gender (*género*) of people drinks affection (*afección*) as if it were water.<sup>42</sup>

Dávila understood women as one among several class/gender of people with which ministers should exercise caution. In the case of women one should be extremely careful. Women have the power to attract a man (*aficionarlo*) using the same kind of love that we have encountered in affective spirituality directed towards God, *afición*. Affectivity linked by now with women is a powerful force that should be resisted. One should not slip. Even when living a straight, ordered, life, too much divine affectivity (*afición*) can become inordinate human *afección*. Too much honey can become the little bit of poison that will cause your death. But today we can only find out if we take the risk and taste it ourselves.

Let us take a sample from one of Dávila's "those books," a 16<sup>th</sup> century edition of Bridget's *Revelationes* (Fig.5). True, her revelations are not as explicit as Agnes'. As Bridgettine scholar Bridget Sahlins shows, censors changed some versions of the *Revelationes*, "certain of the passages throughout the book that deal with sexual matters are omitted or rendered euphemistically."<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless we can find enough biblical bridal language to make Gerson and his legates find them tasteless.



As in Agnes' case, Bridget's object of attraction is not Christ's divinity or an abstract humanity but every part of Christ's body. She takes to lovingly admire every detail of the divine Beloved (Fig. 5):

perfect in size and manly strength, tall for the men of medium height in those days, not fleshy but well built as to muscles and bones. His hair, eyelashes, and beard were golden brown. His beard was a palm-width in length. His forehead was neither prominent nor sunken but straight. His nose was evenly built, neither too little nor too large. His eyes were so limpid that even his enemies loved to gaze on him. His lips were not too thick and were bright red. His jaw did not jut out and was not tooling but attractive and of a fine length. His cheeks were nicely rounded. He was fair-skinned with traces of red, and he had straight posture. There was not a blemish on his whole body, as his scourges can testify who saw him bound to the pillar completely naked.<sup>45</sup>

In this passage, adoring Christ's physical beauty becomes for the Swedish pilgrim saint a devotional practice that does not raise in her any worries about sinful lust. What for those who distinguish secular/religious, sacred/profane literature would be only an expression of sexual desire becomes here consecrated, instead of rejected, as a wholly holy, fully erotic, act. Jesuits reading these passages could be inspired to do the same and bring their erotic desire into their meditations. For those who saw Jesuit prayer as a purgation of desire, Bridget's revelations would promote a reversal of established notions. A male Jesuit adopting Bridget's feminine persona as bride, or another mystical writer, could be thus embracing homoerotic desire as a way to become closer to God.<sup>46</sup>

We should also note that Bridget herself does not restrict desire to the male Christ. She does not shy away from a love that may give rise to *female* homoerotic possibilities. In another

example, she compares the Virgin Mary both to Venus, goddess of love, and Christ, God himself.<sup>47</sup>

O my Lady and my enlightenment, blessed be your most sacred breasts above all the sweetest springs of healing waters. Just as their welling water supplies solace and refreshment for the thirsty, your sacred breasts, in giving milk to the Son of God, supplied us in our need with medicine and consolation.<sup>48</sup>

While her primary focus remains the Son of God, here she also admires the mother of God's human body as lovingly as she did Christ's. We see that after praising Christ's forehead, eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, lips, teeth, tongue, neck, shoulders, hands, arms, ribs, back, knees and feet, she did the same with the Virgin. No member is skipped in her spiritual practice.

In "Early modern blazons and the rhetoric of wonder: turning towards an ethics of sexual difference" Grant Williams discusses the rhetorical equivalent of Bridget's practice above, the *blazon* or downward detailing of a beloved's body. Reading Williams' article can make us aware that Bridget's erotic blazons cannot be distinguished from those that can be traced as early as the Song of Songs and as late as the 16<sup>th</sup> century "pornographic" texts. In fact they can be found together in manuscripts smuggled in England.<sup>49</sup> Some attribute pornography's invention to humanist Pietro Aretino, not only an early modern collector of the medieval art described above in relation to Gerson, but also famous writer of both traditional hagiographic *vitae*, such as his popular biography of another Holy Prepuce devotee, the *Life of Catherine of Siena*, and pornographic satires, such as his *Lives of Nuns*.<sup>50</sup> Since together with smuggled manuscripts in England and elsewhere we find texts by mystics, particularly women saints, we are justified in asking: Is this was Dávila worried about, the Renaissance "cultural wars"?<sup>51</sup>

In his discussion of Spanish cultural wars over sodomy Christian Berco introduces the



term *disoluciones*, a term Spanish inquisitors adopted to refer to sexual heresy.<sup>52</sup> When Dávila speaks about mystical annihilation and abyssal union, he echoes the language of desire and dissolution that I have discussed elsewhere in regards to beguine doctrines of annihilation and deification.<sup>53</sup> We can add that in Gerson we read the complaint about these same doctrines espoused by beguines, should we say he approaches them as leading a “dissolute” life? After writing about drunken women, he gives examples of their theology, claiming their union to be like being dissolved in an abyss, annihilating themselves in God, with whom they become one.

...it happened in our time with a certain woman who was considered by many to be a prophetess and a maker of miracles, whom I saw and to whom I spoke. She finally said and ordered to be written that the spirit in contemplating God was annihilated in true destruction and then recreated. And when she was asked how she could know this, she answered she had experienced it. The day would not be long enough if I wanted to count such countless insanities of these people who are not so much in love as out of their minds...<sup>54</sup>

Centuries before Freud, Gerson considered these mystical experiences as “insane, manic, depressive.”<sup>55</sup> These ideas can only be held by those who are mentally disabled. He again calls for discretion/discernment (*discretio*), for the need “to distinguish between true and false revelations, between men of good, natural judgment and those whose brains cracked-up (*patentem in cerebrum*); prudent, solid, not those from dementia, the ignorant, the melancholic, the deficient.” For him such visions must arise from brain injuries such as epilepsy (*epilepsia*) or “brain freeze” (*congelatione*) especially those who attain such union through revelation without intermediary that is, “melancholic little women.” In Gerson, mysticism and gender issues become inextricably linked with mental disability ones.<sup>56</sup> Do we see such a link in Dávila? Yes.

Gerson the physician recognized the poison. Gerson the physician offers the antidote. Dávila agrees with his predecessor: affective mysticism can become excessive and lead to an abyss and dissolution, a chasm of debauchery. So Dávila suggested to those who don't want to ~~fall~~ "into the abyss", or lose their mind" a suggestion more like a persuasive order permeated by the Renaissance cultural wars: ~~Stop~~ *visitas*, they're dangerous; stop *donecillos*, and stop those dangerous rincón friendships."<sup>57</sup> We know that by *visitas* Dávila meant visits to nuns and *beatas*, by then still a ministry given to novices, because of its unimportance, one that many novices happily accepted. As second in command he warned the general of the Jesuits at Rome and the other Jesuit superiors elsewhere in Europe that young Jesuits were ~~all~~ busy with little beguines (beatitas), with [convent] visits and other kinds of entertainment."<sup>58</sup> But the other two terms give us something new, something closer to early modern melancholia and Hispanic *melancolía*.

When Dávila refers to this class/gender (*genero*) of people that drinks affection (*afección*) as if it were water" he could be easily referring to those who received Jesuit *donecillos*, gifts given to members of those ethnic (*ethnicos*) groups they intended to evangelize, kind of an admission ~~to~~ payment."<sup>59</sup> Dávila thus rejects a popular missionary practice, one curiously paralleling those discussed in this journal by Heather Martel. She described early modern voyagers and their ~~romantic~~ friendships based on gift exchanges" with indigenous men.<sup>60</sup> Not surprisingly, when he tells them to avoid in prayer

~~an~~ "idiotic state, as I call it, or even ~~suspension~~," you do nothing hanging there from the sun's threads, you gain no fruit from prayer; this does not come from God but from your little understanding and from your melancholy, such a suspension arises when the understanding is absent... [such] raptures (*raptos*) had a Moorish woman from [nearby] Valencia, thinking about Mohammed; very recently she was baptized, raptures gone...<sup>61</sup>

Since this lecture was given at Cordoba, a region with a majority of Moors, he intended to address ministry to these Muslim minorities. Here we find that when it comes to racial minority groups he joins Gerson above and other church fathers who believed women, Jews and Moors to be by nature melancholic. Now Dávila links *melancolía* to Spanish mystical theology's suspensions and raptures, the latter often associated with "little women" (*mulierculas*) and "sinister, strange, relations (*siniestras relaciones y peregrinas relaciones*)."<sup>62</sup> Is Dávila insinuating here that Jesuits associating with these kinds/genders of people would become "little women," scaring students by challenging their masculinity?<sup>63</sup>

In a lecture on chastity, Dávila claims that all sins lead to unchastity, "dishonesty." For example, he moves from reading Cassian's *libido* as some sort of greed leading to "dishonesty," citing as several of Saint Paul's letters purportedly teaching that this kind of greed

corrupts the heart, (*mollitei*) *effeminizing* it, disposing it towards any evil; thus the covetous man has lost his natural vigor, susceptible to fall to any demon and to fall into the weakness of dishonesty, his heart susceptible because of its effeminacy, its corruption, its debilitation by greed. So now let us turn to how sadness leads to dishonesty"<sup>64</sup>

And then he goes on adding that patristic and medical texts show how *melancolía* and its imbalance of humors does the same to men. Faithful readers of Foucault will recognize this passage as echoing his "The Battle for Chastity"'s Cassian."<sup>65</sup> For Cassian, fornication can be committed by commingling with persons of either sex (*commixtio sexus utriusque*), or with one's own sex, what Gerson called *peccatum mollitei*. Cassian warns against those friendships that hide under the cover of spirituality a more carnal kind of relationship.<sup>66</sup> Then, in a subsequent lecture following Cassian, Gerson, and especially Saint Basil, Dávila identifies the "rincón or "hook and cranny" friendships of his time as actualizing what not only patristic, but even biblical

texts, said about the abominable *queruli*.

In modern Italian, *querulo*, means bitchy, catty. We do not know if that's what it meant to Dávila, but he certainly was aware that *querulo* appears in the Church Fathers and even in the New Testament. He cites Saint Basil to claim that ~~–~~“whenever there are any ~~–~~hook and cranny” whiners (*quejumbrosos en los rincones*), that's what *clam queruli* means, if once admonished they do not righten up, kick them up, send them away...”<sup>67</sup> *Clam* (secret, covert) *queruli* monks are identified in monastic patristic texts with those named in the Letter of Jude, in relation to the querulous destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrah. Dávila focuses on those ~~–~~*murmuradores*, *querulosi*, *secundum desideria sua ambulantes* (1 Jude 16),” that is, gossipers, bitchy/catty complainers, wanderers/errants after their own lusts who

[e]ven as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also, these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil and disputing about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee!" But these speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they come to know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain and have run greedily after the error of Balaam for their reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are spots on your feasts of charity when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear. Clouds they are without water, carried about by winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars to whom is reserved the

blackness of darkness for ever. ... (KJV Jude 1: 7-16)

As Dávila adds, there's another way of ~~m~~murmuration, a dissembling disguised one, the most successful, I think, which is a man wandering around nook and crannies, murmuring whining gossiping.<sup>68</sup> His *queruli* are *clam*, secret, covert; so we could trace *murmuratores* to Lochrie's ~~s~~sodomitical" gossiping women. In ~~F~~Fongues Waggin, Gossip, Women, and Indiscreet Secrets," part of her *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy*, Lochrie appropriates socio-linguistic theory to describe the function of gossip as a resistant oral discourse of marginalized groups.<sup>69</sup> But his *queruli* come closer to Saint Basil's *clam* (covert, secret) *queruli* read through the lens of Gerson's *querulos*, those strange ones, cursed barren trees, producing no fruit but their own perdition just as the wandering (*errantes/peregrinantes*) stars, the angels that fell from Heaven, seduced by Lucifer, the most brightest and beautiful of all celestial beings.<sup>70</sup> As in the medieval legend of the Wandering Jew, cursed to wander for eternity for erring twice, deviating from the straight path, that is, not walking in the paths of the Lord, and erring in His stubbornness, that is, not accepting Christ. Here we also have the foreign, the exotic, but also errant wandering, i.e., those who wander away from the straight path.<sup>71</sup> Not surprisingly, some late Renaissance humanists in opposition to the Church appropriated the term *pellegrino* for themselves.<sup>72</sup>

Do all these meanings converge in some sort of queer? Around the same time same that Dávila warned his young male students about the dangers of sodomy, another teacher became charged for it, an English choirmaster discussed by E. Pittenger, in her ~~T~~To Serve the Queere': Nicholas Udall, Master of Revels.,"<sup>73</sup> Pittenger apologizes for her title's pun on queer, though keeping it, ~~i~~illegitimate, anachronistic, irresponsible as it might be." No apologies needed. *Fragment* As quick look at the OED shows that early modern ~~q~~queere" links together Dávila 's

querulous, Pittenger's choir, and early modern strange and bad. It also links them to Jewishness and effeminacy. Spanish strange, queer (*peregrino, raro*) becomes for us the thread weaving our early modern linguistic discourse. Indeed, since its first appearance in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, queer's etymological development becomes really queer.<sup>74</sup>

Dávila believed the human heart behaves like a windswept sail. Discipline anchors the heart and takes away the greenness (*verdura*) of our affections ... a man's heart inclines towards (*demasia*) excess, leading to dissolution (*disolución*) and laughter. Discipline takes away excess; God wants us to serve Him with joy, not with laughter."<sup>75</sup> His words eerily echo those we find in Umberto Eco's medieval whodunit, *The Name of the Rose*, voiced by Brother Jorge. Readers or watchers of the movie know what happened to those who read prohibited books, they fell, as those errant, wandering stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind (*Revelations 6:13 KJV*).” Up to here Dávila has traced their *peregrino*, errant, wandering, strange, queer path across the sky departed from the straight path. In sum, those who follow this path lack discretion, discernment, and discipline, which will make them fall into disability, dissolution and debauchery.

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*A “strange alliance joins the “mystic” spoken word to the “impure” blood”*<sup>76</sup>

*-Michel de Certeau SJ*

The microcosmos of Dávila ‘s chats with novices illuminates the macrocosmos of the Society of Jesus in the last decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the decades when Jesuit superiors became suspicious of our ~~secret~~ (secreto)” and ~~strange~~ (*peregrino*)” way of prayer of Mother Teresa of Jesus.” Teresa of Avila found herself sharing with several Jesuits her mystical way of prayer, including two young Jesuits who ministered to women, Antonio Cordeses and Baltasar Alvarez.<sup>77</sup> As we learn in the most recent of the few studies dedicated to the controversy over ~~The Strange Style of Prayer~~: Mercurian, Cordeses, and Alvarez,” soon after his 1573 election General Everard Mercurian prohibits the provincial at Avila, Antonio Cordeses, from teaching a way of silent prayer called ~~affective~~,” or of ~~union~~ of the soul with God.”<sup>78</sup> Cordeses‘ companion and Teresa‘ s confessor, Baltasar Alvarez, also taught this way, as evidenced by the ~~strange folio~~ (extraño papel)” found by his accusers among his writings to an unnamed ~~Vuestra Reverencia~~” assumed to be his spiritual daughter Teresa. Alvarez receives the same sanctions as Cordeses, who then enacts at Avila Mercurian‘ s new tasks, the issuance of an edict banning the reading of popular mystical texts. As we saw, Dávila then justified to novices the prohibition.<sup>79</sup>

As Jesuits historians have uncovered, Jesuit superiors of the time were ordered to adapt the list to texts read in their communities. It is at Avila, the regional center of the controversy, where we find the strictest one. There, Jesuit community superiors for the Hispanic provinces issued an expanded version of Mercurian‘ s edict forbidding the reading of several mystical texts. These were in *addition* to those texts suspected by Spanish and Roman Inquisitors. The edict orders the burning of heretical authors in the Spanish *Index of Prohibited Books*, while authors appearing only in the Roman Index are to be kept under lock and key as are those not considered

heretical.<sup>80</sup> The discoverer of this list, Pedro de Leturia introduced the question I attempt to answer. While Leturia assumes that the censorship pagan “obscene” authors require no explanation, he insightfully recognizes that a novel element emerges here, the restrictions on mystical authors.<sup>81</sup> I argue controversies over classical “obscenity” spread to “medieval” ones, leading in 1573 to mysticism becoming the target of internal censorship.<sup>82</sup>

Endean sums up the answering consensus reached by Leturia and his followers. The onus and blame should be put on the personality of the edict’s issuer General Mercurian, whose decisions Endean then defends.<sup>83</sup> But his short lived generalate barely covers a controversy whose roots, I argue, are entrenched deep centuries earlier in late medieval controversies over mysticism, often centered around Gerson. No one has noted, that the controversy continued well into the next decades, that before the listing of mystical authors, the edict first condemns two Christian spiritual writers, Erasmus and Vives, and then several “obscene” pagan works, or that, with regards to the female authors, this was the first and only time in Spain they would appear in such a list. All these three elements prove to be crucial in controversies over “obscene” authors.

Dávila elsewhere links the spirituality of these authors with earlier “excesses” allowed in Jesuit communities.”<sup>84</sup> Was there a discipline problem exacerbated by books which could have been considered obscene or “dishonest?” Indeed, we can note a transition to later 16<sup>th</sup> century developments as early as a few year before the death of Ignatius, who wrote from his sickbed to Borgia and then to other superiors, that among “ethnic authors, those that are dishonest are not to be read,” even when expressing unusual sympathy for “ethnics” that is “earnal” others.<sup>85</sup> These authors included, as his secretary noted, the works of Erasmus, Vives, Terence or dishonest authors which Fr. Ignatius does not want to be read...” and “the dishonest works of Ovid,” authors that a majority of Jesuits kept reading, ignoring Ignatius’ new rules.



...outside of Rome, this rule is not strictly followed, especially if these works have already begun to be read. Even here in Rome these authors are made decent in the following way: From Martial, Horace, and similar authors we take what is dishonest and the rest is left along with their names...we keep the good parts from Erasmus and so on with the other authors.<sup>86</sup>

They did similarly with other humanist authors, which, even when faithful Christians were often linked with “ethnic” Jews. Ethnic (*ethnicos*), included those who were not of the Christian “pure race (*pura raza*).” That is, *conversos* from Jewish, Muslim, or colonial descent. Most academic and ecclesiastic authorities of the time traced these groups to biblical tribes that became geographically dispersed tribes after God cursed them. Sometimes they extended the category to include Lutherans and “other Sodomites.” These latter groups purportedly consisted of heretics or apostates once belonging to the Christian race. Yet, as prophesied in Romans 1: 24-27, they “changed the truth of God into a lie... [so] God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.” Nevertheless, early Jesuits discriminated only those fitting the vague category of being “unfit for religious life because of natural infirmity or other insuperable impediment.”<sup>87</sup> Ignatius himself welcomed as Jesuits those *ethnicos* rejected by the two other major religious orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans, whose new members replenished each generation the ranks of the Spanish inquisition. Yet seemingly books read by the next generation will also fit the controversial category.

Endean attempts to rehabilitate the superiors of this “book censoring” period, specially Mercurian, as traditionalists trying to go back to the “original line of Ignatius.” He cites Mercurian: “There is nothing under my responsibility that I want more than to see things going

along the original line [*ver andar las cosas segun la primera traza*] of our father Ignatius, of holy memory, and with that simplicity and uniformity appropriate to our Institute.”<sup>88</sup> Edean argues that the superiors of the time sought to preserve Ignatius’ insistence on an active life of ministry, one not overshadowed by a ~~monastic~~,” contemplative spirituality.

And yet Alvarez, Cordeses and other readers of mysticism engaged in active ministry to women and ethnic others.<sup>89</sup> So perhaps we should agree with another Jesuit scholar who claims Mercurian sought an ~~uniformity~~ that was no less obsessive than that sought by McDonalds for their global quarter-pounders.” I would add that such a quest for uniformity best explains why we should re-translate *traza* as *t/raza* (t/race). In the multicultural Spanish towns of the ~~West Indies~~,” pureblood Spaniards resigned themselves to the presence of Indians but they insisted on reserving in each town a *traza*, the checkerboard grid area that designated the urban space exclusively for Spaniards and casted out to live in outer wards or barrios those who were of a different *raza*.<sup>90</sup> In the ~~Oriental~~” missions of the ~~East Indies~~,” established by missionaries who refused to adopt a *traza* and chose instead to ~~go native~~” and inculturate through Indian language and customs, later became a colonialist enterprise exemplified by the Jesuit superior of the mission, who labeled the Brahmin bishop of Bijapur a ~~bare bottomed Nigger~~.”<sup>91</sup>

We thus find a transition to a later period which opens in 1573, with the election of Mercurian as the founder's third successor and the edict on mysticism, and closes with the turn of the century, when, as historian Jean Krynen states, summarizing the consensus of Jesuit historiography, the official codification of the Ignatian legacy under the direction of Dávila and the authority of general Acquaviva, namely ~~the~~ *Directory of Exercises*, published in 1599, [which] only confirmed the non-mystical orientation of Jesuit spirituality.”<sup>92</sup>

In my article “Heterosexual Melancholia and Mysticism in the Early Society of Jesus” Juan Miguel Marín noted that such a transition can be noted in these last three decades of the century.<sup>93</sup> Until then, Jesuit ministry to women flourished but dwindled afterwards.<sup>94</sup> Other historians have come to similar conclusions. Leading historian of the Jesuits, Ignacio Iparraguirre, found out that the ministry of Jesuit spiritual exercises flourished everywhere except in the feminine [lay] sector where it suffered a notable diminution. Nowhere else among exercitants was the change so great.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, he adds that in the ministry to nuns a considerable difference can be noted between 1560 - 1570 and the last three decades of the century.<sup>96</sup> Around these same decades we find, according to Marc Rastoin’s “From Windfall to Fall: Conversos in the Society of Jesus,” which summarizes the conclusions of scholarship in this area. Whereas the majority of religious orders rejected them,

[c]onversos were warmly welcomed in the Society, [but only] for an extremely brief period. Their admission in Spain peaked between 1549 and 1559, declined through the 1560's and became almost negligible in the 1570's.... Between 1573 and 1593, intensified pressure resulted in increased restriction on their acceptance, until the [1599] congregational decree barred them completely.<sup>97</sup>

So evidence points to what, in amore theoretical vein, Jesuit Michel de Certeau concluded. A “strange alliance between mysticism and impure blood” emerged in tension between two poles constantly repeated in the documents of the time: *nostrum* and *alienum (ou peregrinum)*, that which is our and that which is strange.<sup>98</sup> We add now that that Dávila played the central role in drafting these documents.

The rubric of xenophobia turns out useful when we note how Dávila’s emphasis on finding out which spiritualities are alien (*ajeno*), which are domestic and which are strange

(*peregrino*), which adulterated (*adulterino*) and which are true, which are ours and which are foreign (*de fuera*).” exemplifies those Jesuit attitudes towards both women and foreigners that were becoming popular in the 1570’s. We find such attitudes reverberating in another example from a different Jesuit source on the purported foreigner problem.

In 1578, a certain superior Father Ibañez found in discretion about spiritual practices the solution to the foreigner problem:

Foreigners are not to be given the Exercises, unless they are so virtuous and so exemplary and exemplary that one can expect much from them...Trashy people (*chusma*) are not to be admitted ...There has to be great selectivity (*delectu*) when admitting people to the exercises.<sup>99</sup>

What Ibañez required of foreigners will be defended with similar language in the context of the other directories but with regards to unwelcome others, encompassing an emerging gendered xenophobia towards foreigners and colonized others. Not only will the final approved version of the Directory states: “Not much time should be spent on ignorant and unlettered persons, and they should not be given the complete Exercises...This applies also to women.”<sup>100</sup> The latter was also stricter variant of Mercurian and Dávila’s own Directory, which advised that only in the case of women “of a high mental and spiritual quality, might the Exercises be given in full;” a case he doubts “would be frequent.”<sup>101</sup> Not surprisingly, foreigner, ethnic males (*eticos*) in Spain and indigenous people in the colonies became the primary target of accusations of sodomy, giving much work to those who drafted inquisitorial documents about judiciary processes and criminal incarceration of those considered mentally and spiritually unfit and/or disabled.

Rejection of ethnic foreigners did not becomes official until the turn of the century, but

around the 1580s, the decades Dávila's accusations against mysticism became increasingly accepted, Dávila requested the collection of treatises discussing racial issues, especially those defending the earlier exclusion of racial minorities from the Franciscan and Dominican orders.<sup>102</sup> Perhaps he was preparing to argue on behalf of a constitutional amendment banning the admissions of foreign converts (*converso*) at the next Jesuit gathering at Rome. Unofficially this was *de facto* the case. Mercurian, together with his chosen second in command, none other than Dávila, had from the very first years of his office proceeded to "deanse the house:" he removed from Rome (and possibly Italy and even Europe) many *converso* Jesuits."<sup>103</sup> In his seven years in office Mercurian and Dávila also cleansed the Jesuit houses of easily available mystical literature. So, if Dávila, was indeed making plans to make these decisions constitutionally official, his efforts succeeded.

At the turn of the century, Ignatius' wish for a multiracial Society of Jesus failed. Jesuit congregators amended the Jesuit *Constitutions* as follows:

The ministries of our Society are exercised with greater fruit in the general quest for the salvation of souls in proportion to the distance. Ours are from those human situations that can prove offensive to others. Those, however, who are descended from parents who are recent Christians have routinely been in the habit of inflicting a great deal of *hindrance* and harm on the Society... The entire congregation has then decided to decree, as is affirmed by this present decree, that in no case, one of Hebrew [Jewish] or Saracen [Muslim] stock, henceforth to be admitted into the Society. And if by error any such will have been admitted, he should be dismissed...<sup>104</sup>

The ban enacted on the admission of those of "impure blood" was so strict that not even the Superior General could make a dispensation.<sup>105</sup> As soon as the race issue was settled, the next

item of the agenda for the following years was the issue of an official *Directorio* that would give the official “non-mystical” interpretation to Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises*. It is this episode that xenophobia prevails.<sup>106</sup>

Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* emphasized sensual/sensorial (*sensual*) prayer based on an “application of the senses,” that is, imagining biblical scenes through perceptual intensification. For example, when it comes to a mystical term referring to sensuality/sensoriality, *persentiscere*, Dávila claims such term from the mystical theological tradition “has been much criticized. Explained according to sound doctrine, it is not dangerous, but since such expressions are abused in Spain by *alumbrados* and *dejados*, I would prefer to make clear the mind of our Father Ignatius, rather than use this word without qualification”<sup>107</sup> By *alumbrados* and *dejados* Dávila refers to a recent “outbreak” of a purported underground heretical group, one assumed to have been eliminated at the beginning of the century when Spanish inquisitors burned lay groups affiliated to monasteries, many of them welcoming not only recent converts from ethnic Jewish and Muslim groups but even women leaders still known as *beguines* (*beatas*). The latest outbreak differed in the emphasis of inquisitors (and extracted confessions) on purported sexual sins committed in confession between priests and penitents, resulting in a gendered persecution of mystical practices that Alison Weber has called a “demonization of ecstasy.” These events may have inspired religious leaders to seek patristic texts associating such “heretics” deviations from orthodoxy with sexual deviation. At least Dávila seems to be making such associations.

In order to ensure the reception of Jesuit exercises as orthodoxly pure, that is as a straight path far from any doctrinal deviation Dávila, he defends an early directory draft stating:

[T]he application of the senses, can either be understood as referring to the imaginative senses, and this would hold for a person with less experience in meditation, such as those

to whom the Exercises are most commonly given; or they can be understood as pertaining to the senses of the higher intellect or mind, and this is appropriate for those who are more advanced and have experience...<sup>108</sup>

This contemplative mode is a transition that occurs after an affective use of the imagination. We know that he is aware of the erotic possibilities involved in an affective encounter with Christ through an imaginative application of the senses. He will tone down his mystical interpretation to avoid its association with the kind of spirituality that Mercurian prohibited.<sup>109</sup> For example, even those more welcoming of mysticism cautioned that when it comes to kissing Christ the exercitant should restrict himself (and by this time an exercitant was assumed to be male) to kissing Christ's feet or garments: ~~In~~ imagining ourselves to kiss anything further, however, let the imagining be accompanied by reverence."<sup>110</sup> Not many superiors would have welcomed any hint of affectivity so notes such as ~~the~~ director's prudence will dictate the measure in which these matters should be brought up" became common.<sup>111</sup>

Even then such precautions were not enough for Dávila. He denied that an exercitant smells and touches Christ. Instead, Dávila defended ~~a~~ loftier treatment" of spiritual exercises, that is, one not ~~smacking~~ of flesh and blood."<sup>112</sup> An exercitant ought to ~~avoid~~ mixing in human affections," like St. Thomas Aquinas, who ~~applied~~ these senses to intercourse with the Word made flesh [that is,]...smelling the graces of his meekness, tasting the sweetness of his compassion touching his power in order to be saved"<sup>113</sup> Dávila must have had fresh in mind reports such as the one claiming the mystical method led a fellow Jesuit mad after he was taught ~~to~~ contemplate Christ's wound and stay there lovingly."<sup>114</sup> Another Jesuit claimed that this kind of prayer only led to a mad ~~—~~monkish visionarism" since it ~~is~~ like a great [Carthusian] nest for crackpots and crazies, and for those who believe that the silly things that

they imagine are *revelations* (italics mine).”<sup>115</sup>

In a mystical experience, Christ became too ~~r~~revealing.” So as to avoid the homoerotic implications that the idea of touching Christ could give rise to in the practice of exercises, by now almost always restricted to men, Dávila allows the mystical term of union with Christ, but reinterprets it in militaristic imagery. He proposes a unitive way in which ~~m~~editation of these realities powerfully inflames the human spirit with love for the eternal fatherland so that it desires to be *dissolved* and be with Christ” thus re-appropriating and reinterpreting mystical terms in a more ~~m~~anly” manner.<sup>116</sup> His reaction parallels, in the Jesuit spiritual stage, what Sidney Donnell finds in the Spanish theatrical stage.

Donnell’s *Feminizing the Enemy*, presents as ~~a~~ crisis of masculinity during the early modern period that was related to the propagandistic process of feminizing its enemies, both foreign and domestic.”<sup>117</sup> He finds something similar reflected in Spanish theater, which earlier in the century was either strictly religious or academic, the latter only at Jesuit institutions. Then mid century secular theater began and the admission of women to the dramatic profession. Jesuit theater as educational required boys to play women’s parts but around 1587, in reaction to both Jesuit and secular practices, Spanish authorities prohibited gender transvestism. Also this year we find Jesuit superiors answering the question whether young women should be allowed to participate in theatrical plays so as to avoid the necessity of having young men wear drag. The latter evil was preferable to the former, so the answer was negative. Also negative was the Pope’s answer to the Spanish’s nuncio question: should eunuchs be allowed to marry.<sup>118</sup> We see then that threats to ideals of Hispanic masculine identity appeared from several fronts.

We could characterize these threats with Donnell’s conclusions about the many dramatic productions that parodied



...the over determined concern of church and state in the period about the dangers women posed to the integrity of masculine identity by focusing on the main problem: the degree to which society permits men to bond intimately with other men until such contact threatens the fragile construction of their masculinity. Signs of decline in the empire and an erratic behavior of church and state led to a spiritual crisis in Spain's collective relation to the father. The result was a crisis of masculinity in the ruling classes -- characterized by cultural anxiety, homosexual panic and eventually hysteria --when homological bonds became uncertain or even treacherous.<sup>119</sup>

What Donnell explains in psychoanalytic terms we can explain in historiographical ones and then extrapolate to the Jesuit context of our controversy. Late 16<sup>th</sup> century Jesuit superiors issued the edict in the midst of cultural transitions Donnell identifies as threats paralleling the decline of the Spanish empire. We can add that this decline also parallels in the global discursive theater the dramatic defeat of *king* Catholic Philip II's "Invincible Armada" at the hands of Protestant *queen* Elizabeth I. This 1588 defeat preceded anti-sodomitic statutes issued during Philip's reign (d.1554-1598), statutes accompanied by others heightening the persecution of women and marginal minority groups. For example, the Spanish Inquisition, at first founded to investigate suspicions concerning crypto-Jewish and Muslim practices among Jewish and Muslim converts, gained under Philip II the power to persecute other practices considered heretical, such as sodomy, thus extending its reach even beyond the racial persecution that reached its peak at the turn of the century. Sexual practices, earlier condemned as the nefarious sin (*pecado nefando*), now became criminalized together with racialized and gendered sodomitical heresy.<sup>120</sup>

The historical documents parallel the Ignatian texts emphasized at this time. As we read in the Ignatian Exercises, devotees practicing Ignatius' Exercises' Meditation on Christ's

Kingdom in the Second Week ought

to imagine a great plain in the region of Jerusalem, where the supreme commander of the good people is Christ our Lord; then another plain in the region of Babylon, where the leader of the enemy is Lucifer [where] he summons uncountable devils, you have to add this disperses some to one city and others, to another, and thus throughout the whole world.<sup>121</sup>

Who the uncountable devils of the last decades in the Society of Jesus should be clear by now. Jesuits had to live in these last decades with a revolt of moriscos in 1569-1571 that only ended with a violent monarchic repression and their eventual expulsion at the beginning of the next century. Whether the enemy was Protestant regents abroad or racial minorities and disordered women closer to home, a masculine self-identity was being threatened requiring the imposition of exclusionary measures. As some historians have recently suggested, evidence has begun to accumulate so as to reveal that “lust was at the heart of the Protestant Reformation,” a lust inseparable from the sexualized other, whether Protestant, indigenous or “Mohameddan;” even to the point that “the notion that the Reformation contributed to the intensification of masculinity in early modern Europe [which] now seems a commonplace<sup>122</sup> Spanish shattered masculinity would need to be reinvigorated in these last decades by increasing the persecution of sodomites to levels never reached before.

From Jesuit microcosmos to Hispanic macrocosmos, “xenophobia” has provides us here with a rubric connecting the 1573 edict against mysticism with the 1599 decree against the admission of racialized and gendered others. Despite that the nascent Society of Jesus once served as a refuge for such groups, Spanish *xenophobia* finally over swept what for some was a Jesuit last bastion of sanity. Whether the enemy was Protestant regents abroad, or

disordered *conversos*, women and sodomites closer to home, a masculine self-identity was being threatened requiring the imposition of exclusionary measures. Mystical practices associated with these groups and with homoerotic potential had to be excluded too. A malaise was found in the Society and the remedy applied involved the expurgation of what were considered pathological agents. Jesuit superiors queered mysticism, as a homoerotic challenge to normative masculine ideals about Jesuit identity so it had to be expurgated from Jesuit consciousness and the future Society of Jesus.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>1</sup> —Sic quoque compatiens et flens coepit cogitare de praeputio domini, ubi unquam esset. Et ecce, mox sensit super linguam suam parvam pelliculam ad modum pelliculae ovi cum praemaxima dulcedine, quam egulvit. Et hoc accidit ei bene centum vicibus. Et cum totiens sentiret. Tentata est digito eam attingere. Quod cum vellet facere, illa pellicula de se in gutture descendit. Et dictum est ei, quod praeputium cum domino surrexit in die resurrectionis. Tanta fuit dulcedo in degustatione hujus pelliculae, quod in omnis membrorum articulis sensit dulcem immutationem.” [Houghton 25235.21\*] Agnetis Blannbekin, vita et revelationes auctore anonymo. Accessit Pothonis, liber de miraculis sanctae Dei genitricis Mariae. Utrumque opusculum ex MSS codd. primum edidit Bernardus Pez. (Vienna: Petrum Conrad Monath, 1731). See also Bernhard Pez, *Epistolae Apologeticae Pro Ordine S. Benedicti Adv. Libellum “Cura Salutis,”* 1715. Ildefonso (Santo), Sanctissimi Patris Ildefonsi Archiepiscopi Toletani ... aureus libellus de illibata virginitate sanctae Mariae, genitricis Dei, ac dominae nostrae (excudebat vidua Ioannis Mey, 1556).

<sup>2</sup> Pez, 17-22, 35.

<sup>3</sup> Dinzelbacher, 17-22, 35.

<sup>4</sup> Baltasar Alvarez, *Escritos Espirituales*, Serie A--Textos t. 4 (Barcelona: J. Flors, 1961). For a case study on the pejorative use of *rarus*, see Certeau “The Gaze of Nicholas of Cusa” *Diacritics* Fall 1987, n.5.

<sup>5</sup> J. M Marín, “Heterosexual Melancholia and Mysticism in the Early Society of Jesus,” *Theology and Sexuality* 13, no. 2 (2007): 121.

<sup>6</sup> Alvarez, *Escritos*, 151, 739 and Philip Endean S.J., “The Strange Style of Prayer: Mercurian, Cordes, and Alvarez” in *The Mercurian Project: Forming Jesuit Culture, 1573-1580*, 1st ed, Series III--Original Studies, Composed in English no. 18 (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2004). See also Glotin, Edouard SJ, “Actividad en la oración? El jesuita Baltasar Alvarez, confesor de Teresa de Jesús” *Manresa*, LVII (1985), N°223, p. 163-180; and Abad, C. M. —Sobre la lectura indiscreta de escritos místicos” *Manresa* 32. 124 1960/3 207-222. For the controversy over the term queer in this context see “Return to Queer Iberia”. 30.1 (Fall 2001): 215-65

<sup>7</sup> Pedro de Leon, *Grandeza y miseria en Andalucía: Testimonio de una encrucijada histórica*, (Facultad de Teología, n.d.), ; See also; Stephen Haliczer, *Sexuality in the Confessional: A Sacrament Profaned* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Stephen Haliczer, *Between Exaltation and Infamy: Female Mystics in the Golden Age of Spain* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); For raro see For raro see José Cartagena-Calderón, “¿Es Tan Rara Persona? Sobre Cortesanos, Lindos, Sodomitas y Otras Masculinidades Nefandas En La España de La Temprana Edad Moderna,” *Lesbianism and Homosexuality in Early Modern Spain, New Orleans, University Press of the South* (2000): 139–175 and *The Outrageous Juan Rana Entremeses: A Bilingual and Annotated Selection of Plays Written for This Spanish Golden Age Gracioso* (University of Toronto Press, 2009), 11., See also Carla Freccero, *Queer/early/modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). For the term “peregrino” see also Rose M. Bidler, *Dictionnaire érotique: ancien français, moyen français, renaissance* (CERES, 2002). Rebecca E. Zorach, “The Matter of Italy: Sodomy and the Scandal of Style in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28 (1998): 581–610 and W. Schleiner, —Inguistic Xenophobia in Sixteenth-Century France: The Case of Henri Estienne,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* (2003): 747–760. Josep M.

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Armengol-Carrera, 1433118513, and 978-1433118517, *Queering Iberia* (Masculinity Studies: Literary and Cultural Representations), First printing edition (Peter Lang Publishing, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 1) (Fig. 2) (Fig. 3) (Fig. 4)

<sup>9</sup> Selections from *A Deo exivit, Contra curiositatem studentium and De mystica theologia speculative* -Volumes 35-41 p. 28

<sup>10</sup> *Oración apologética por la España y su mérito literario, para que sirva de ...*

<sup>11</sup> Quote from Baltasar Alvarez, *Escritos Espirituales*, Serie A--Textos t. 4 (Barcelona: J. Flors, 1961).

<sup>12</sup> See Agnes Blannbekin, *Agnes Blannbekin, Viennese Beguine: Life and Revelations*, Ulrike Wiethaus ed. Library of Medieval Women (Cambridge, Eng: D.S. Brewer, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> A. Hollywood, "That Glorious Slit": Irigaray and the Medieval Devotion to Christ's Side Wound," *Luce Irigaray and Premodern Culture: Thresholds of History* (2004): 105–25; "Queering the Beguines," *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2007). See also *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, Medieval Cultures v. 11 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Hollywood, *Queering*, 164.

<sup>16</sup> For some of the classic texts in the debate over medieval devotional and sexuality see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991); *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, 2nd ed., rev. and expanded (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Susanna Cornwall, *Controversies in Queer Theology*, 168. Peter Dinzelsbacher and Renate Vogeler, trans., *Leben Und Offenbarungen Der Wiener Begine Agnes Blannbekin (1315)*, Göppinger Arbeiten Zur Germanistik Nr. 419 (Göppingen: Künnerle, 1994), 406. For the historical context of Holy Prepuce's devotees, including Agnes, see Renate R.P. Palazzo "The Veneration of the Sacred Foreskin (s) of Baby Jesus—A Documented Analysis" (n.d.) in *Multicultural Europe and Cultural Exchange: In the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance v. 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005). Susanna Cornwall, *Controversies in Queer Theology*, 168.

<sup>18</sup> Jean Gerson and Brian Patrick McGuire, *Jean Gerson: Early Works*, Classics of Western Spirituality. (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 253. For the obscenity debate I found helpful *Obscenity: Social Control and Artistic Creation in the European Middle Ages*, Cultures, Beliefs, and Traditions v. 4 (Leiden [The Netherlands]: Brill, 1998); of York University, *Medieval Obscenities* (Woodbridge: York Medieval, 2006); Leonard Barkan, *Transuming Passion: Ganymede and the Erotics of Humanism* (Stanford University Press, 1991); Armando Maggi, "On Kissing and Sighing: Renaissance Homoerotic Love from Ficino's *De Amore* and *Sopra Lo Amore* to Cesare Trevisani's *L'impresa* (1569)," *Journal of Homosexuality* 49, no. 3–4 (2005): 315–339; Alberto Pérez Gómez, *Polyphilo, or, The Dark Forest Revisited: An Erotic Epiphany of Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992); Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press US, 2000); Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Ingrid de Smet and Philip Ford, *Eros Et Priapus* (Librairie Droz, 1997); Sarah Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 253.

<sup>19</sup> Jean Gerson and Brian Patrick McGuire, *Jean Gerson: Early Works*, Classics of Western Spirituality. (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 253.

<sup>20</sup> Johannes Gerson, *Opera Omnia* (Georg Olms Verlag AG, 1987), 3, 291.

<sup>21</sup> Sarah Blick and Rita Tekippe, *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles* (BRILL, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> *Church History* 77:2 (June 2008): 266.

<sup>23</sup> Gerson, *Expostulatio... adversus corruptionem juventutis per lascivas imagines et alia hujus modi lascivas imagines* Opera, III.

- <sup>24</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (Vintage, 1990), 53, 116-7. For Gerson, —mystic, enemy of mystics,” see B.P. McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (Pennsylvania State Univ Pr, 2005).
- <sup>25</sup> *Obscenity: Social Control and Artistic Creation in the European Middle Ages*, Cultures, Beliefs, and Traditions v. 4 (Leiden [The Netherlands]: Brill, 1998). We could add that also with Gerson we find the first instance of the term obscenity, also in a legal context not far from modern obscenity laws. Indeed, obscenity laws seem to be behind the modern censorship of Agnes’ manuscript. See Dinzelsbacher, 35.
- <sup>26</sup> González Dávila, *Pláticas Sobre Las Reglas De La Compañía De Jesús*, 391.
- <sup>27</sup> This book, the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas A Kempis, became one of the most influential spiritual books in Spain, especially once included at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century multi-volume *Opera Omnia* by Jean Gerson.
- <sup>28</sup> At Padua Gil González Dávila, *Pláticas Sobre Las Reglas De La Compañía De Jesús*, Serie A--Textos t. 13 (Barcelona: J. Flors, 1964), 95.
- <sup>29</sup> —Fengo muy buenos cartapacios, adquiridos con cambalaches que Vuestra Reverencia no sabe” Ibid., 56.
- <sup>30</sup> —que no andemos buscando otras doctrinas o imaginaciones que leímos acullá en el otro libro” Ibid., 101.
- <sup>31</sup> *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts*, Series I--Jesuit primary sources, in English translations no. 15 (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 3.
- <sup>32</sup> —el buscarle explicaciones, y aun ponerlas en cartapacios, y buscar doctrinas de no se de que libro de acullá... en la oración habemos de procurar destruir esta ponzoña” González Dávila, *Pláticas* , 108.
- <sup>33</sup> Gerson, *Early Works*, 381.
- <sup>34</sup> Heather Martel, —Colonial Allure: Normal Homoeroticism and Sodomy in French and Timucuan Encounters in Sixteenth-Century Florida,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22, no. 1 (2013): 34.
- <sup>35</sup> See Wiley and Paola Zito, *Giulia E L’inquisitore: Simulazione Di Santità E Misticismo Nella Napoli Di Primo Seicento*, Citra & Ultra 3 (Napoli: Arte tipografica, 2000), 136.
- <sup>36</sup> Marín, .
- <sup>37</sup> Latin Vulgate, Heb.13:9.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid. See also Daniel Hobbins, *Authorship and publicity before print: Jean Gerson and the transformation of late medieval learning* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009) Deborah Fraioli Gerson —Judging Women of Spirit: From Female Mystics to Joan of Arc,” Ann W. Astell and Bonnie Wheeler, *Joan of Arc and spirituality* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Brian Patrick McGuire, *A companion to Jean Gerson* (Brill, 2006); Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*, (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2003); Moshe Sluhovskiy, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
- <sup>39</sup> González Dávila, *Pláticas*, 444, 445, 703.
- <sup>40</sup> Juan de Horozco y Covarrubias, *Tatado de la verdadera y falsa profecía*. - (Cuesta, 1588), 22.
- <sup>41</sup> See Brian Patrick McGuire, —Sexual Control and Spiritual Growth in the late Middle Ages: The Case of Jean Gerson” in Nancy Van Deusen, *Tradition and Ecstasy: the Agony of the Fourteenth Century*, *Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen* (Institute of Mediaeval Music) ; Bd. 62/3. (Ottawa, Canada: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1997).
- <sup>42</sup> Dávila
- <sup>43</sup> Claire L Sahlin, *Birgitta of Sweden and the Voice of Prophecy: a Study of Gender and Religious Authority in the Later Middle Ages*, 1996.
- <sup>44</sup> Anonymous The Crucifixion with St Bridget in Adoration 1495-1510 Hand coloured woodcut print on paper The British Museum, London Brigida de Suecia (Santa), *Reuelationes celestes p[ra]electe spo[n]se Christi Beate Birgitte vidue: de regno Suecie: octo libris diuise ...* (p[er] Anthoniu[m] Koberger ciue[m] Nuremburgen[?]) impresse, 1521). For the depicted fragments see James Grantham Turner in 'Print Quarterly' December 2004, XXI, pp.369-79.
- <sup>45</sup> *Revelaciones*, IV, 127. Translation in *Revelations of St. Bridget of Sweden* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), Book IV, 230.
- <sup>46</sup> Marín, *ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> Williams, 127.
- <sup>48</sup> Saint Bridget (of Sweden), Marguerite Tjader Harris, and Albert Ryle Kezel, *Life and Selected Revelations* (Paulist Press, 1990), 233ff; *Prophetia De Santa Brigida*. (Rome: s.n., 1500).

- <sup>49</sup> Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford University Press US, 2000); Sarah Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- <sup>50</sup> Pietro Aretino, *La vita di Catherina Vergine*, 1540; Pietro Aretino, *The Secret Life of Nuns* (Hesperus, 2004); James Cleugh, *The Divine Aretino: A Biography* (New York: Stein and Day, 1966). See also Lee, op. cit Moulton, *Before Pornography*, 61, and “The penis possessed: phallic birds, erotic magic, and sins of the body, ca. 1470-1500.”
- <sup>51</sup> Moulton, *Before Pornography*; Toulalan, *Imagining Sex*. See Edward Muir, *The Culture Wars of the Late Renaissance: Skeptics, Libertines, and Opera*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007).
- <sup>52</sup> Cristian Berco, *Sexual Hierarchies, Public Status: Men, Sodomy, and Society in Spain’s Golden Age* (University of Toronto Press, 2007).
- <sup>53</sup> J. Marin, —“Annihilation and Deification in Beguine Theology and Marguerite Porete’s Mirror of Simple Souls,” *Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 01 (2010): 89–109;
- <sup>54</sup>
- <sup>55</sup> Glorieux, 3:39; Gerson and McGuire, *Jean Gerson.*, 49
- <sup>56</sup> Glorieux, 3:39; Gerson and McGuire, *Jean Gerson.*, 49
- <sup>57</sup> Dávila, *Pláticas*, 135.
- <sup>58</sup> “todos ocupados con beatitas, con visitas y otras clases de divertimentos” González Dávila, *Pláticas*, 53.
- <sup>59</sup> I. Combès, —“La mala fe potorera. Apóstatas, doncellas y dinámicas étnicas en Chiquitos,” *Campos-Revista de Antropología Social* 9, no. 2 (2009).
- <sup>60</sup> Martel, 34.
- <sup>61</sup> Dávila, *Pláticas*, 135.
- <sup>62</sup> Pedro de León, *Grandeza y miseria en Andalucía: testimonio de una encrucijada histórica, 1578-1616* (Facultad de Teología, 1981), 435, 438.
- <sup>63</sup> These *relaciones* thus echo the “interfaith sexual intercourse” discussed by Jane Hwang Degenhart in her study of gender, race and sexuality in early modern England. Jane Hwang Degenhardt, *Islamic Conversion and Christian Resistance on the Early Modern Stage* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010). For a stronger case discussing the early modern Italian rhetoric concerning “Jews, [who] like the witches and the sodomites, were unable and unwilling to repent and embrace the “natural” faith” see Armando Maggi, *Satan’s Rhetoric: A Study of Renaissance Demonology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 73.
- <sup>64</sup> —. fornication, immunditia, luxuria, idolum servitus, que es lo mismo que avaricia” “Envilece el corazón, hacerlo afeminado, dispuesto para cualquier mal; y así el avariento tiene perdido el vigor natural, esta sujeto a cualquier demonio y a caer en flaquezas de deshonestidad; para las cuales esta muy dispuesto su corazón por estar muy afeminado y envilecido y debilitado con la flaqueza de avaricia —“Ahora veamos como la tristeza inclina a la deshonestidad.” Ibid.
- <sup>65</sup> “The Battle for Chastity” Michel Foucault and Jeremy R Carrette, *Religion and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
- <sup>66</sup> Cassian, *Institutions*, II; For Cassian see Michel Foucault and Jeremy R Carrette, *Religion and culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (Vintage, 1990); Julian Haseldine, *Friendship in medieval Europe* (Sutton, 1999); Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence*, *Studies in the history of sexuality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 229-250.
- <sup>67</sup> “Oid una doctrina de Basilio en la Regla 47 de las fusius disputadas, pregunta 47; el cual tiene unos vocablos caseros: Cuando hubiere, dice algunos quejumbrosos en los rincones, que eso quiere decir clam queruli, ésos, dice Basilio, cuando una vez amonestados no se enmendaren, echadlos de casa, despedidlos de vuestra compañía.”
- <sup>68</sup> “otra manera de murmurar disimulada y disfrezada, la más eficaz, a mi ver, que es andar el hombre quejándose por los rincones.” For the “early modern closet” see and Gianclaudio Civalè, *Con Secreto Y Disimulación: Inquisizione Ed Eresia Nella Siviglia Del Secolo XVI* (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 2007).
- <sup>69</sup> Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy*, *The Middle Ages Series* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 57.
- <sup>70</sup> “Corporis castitas sine castitatis animi, est sicut spica sine grano, seu crumena sine denariis. Culpa nostra non natura querulous nos facit atque maestos. Delectatio muliebriter amantium insensibus est dementia...” Gerson, *De Imitatione Christi lib. IIII*; Jean de Gerson, *De Imitatione Christi libri IIII*, 1534.

<sup>71</sup> Publicaciones de la Fundación Universitaria Española 31 (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, Seminario Cisneros, 1978); Jonathan Goldberg, *Queering the Renaissance* (Duke University Press, 1994); *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2007); Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S Hutcheson, *Queer Iberia: sexualities, cultures, and crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, Series Q (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>72</sup> For this sense of pellegrino as foreign/exotic/errant/wandering see Julia L. Hairston, "D' sangue illustre & pellegrino: Eclipsing the Body in the Lyric of Tullia d'Aragona," in Julia L. Hairston and Walter Stephens, *The Body in Early Modern Italy* (JHU Press, 2010).

<sup>73</sup> E. Pittenger, "To Serve the Queere": Nicholas Udall, Master of Revels," *Queering the Renaissance* (n.d.): 162–89.

<sup>74</sup> While not making these connections, Philip Durkin shows how complicated the etymology of 'queer' became soon after its appearance in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. See Philip Durkin, *The Oxford Guide to Etymology* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 216–8.

<sup>75</sup> "anéanos el viento como a la veleta. Esta disciplina es la que da peso al corazón, quita la verdura de nuestros afectos ... el corazón del hombre, que tiene inclinación a la demasia, da luego en disolución y en risadas: esta disciplina quita la demasia: quiere Dios que le sirvamos con alegría, mas no con risadas." <sup>75</sup> Dávila, *Pláticas*, 1359

<sup>76</sup> Certeau, 21.

<sup>77</sup> See Marin, n.8 above.

<sup>78</sup> Alvarez, *Escritos*, 739 and Philip Endean S.J., "The Strange Style of Prayer: Mercurian, Cordeses, and Alvarez" in *The Mercurian Project: Forming Jesuit Culture, 1573-1580*, 1st ed, Series III--Original Studies, Composed in English no. 18 (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2004). See also Glotin, Edouard SJ, "Actividad en la oración? El jesuita Baltasar Alvarez, confesor de Teresa de Jesús" *Manresa*, LVII (1985), N°223, p. 163-180; and Abad, C. M. "Sobre la lectura indiscreta de escritos místicos" *Manresa* 32. 124 1960/3 207-222.

<sup>79</sup> Alvarez, *Escritos Espirituales*. Pedro Leturia, *Estudios Ignacianos* (Roma: Institutum Historicum S. I, 1957), 365. See also his "D'Index: L'ordonnance du P. Mercurian sur l'usage des livres prohibites et son interpretation Lyonnais en 1597." *Recherches de science religieuse* 42 (1951), 86-98 and Cristian Berco, "Social Control and Its Limits: Sodomy, Local Sexual Economies, and Inquisitors During Spain's Golden Age," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 36, no. 2 (July 1, 2005): 331–358.

<sup>80</sup> These include Erasmus' works, that is, those not prohibited, and those of Luis Vives, which are to be similarly kept, under lock and key. Rectors can grant permission to read these books, but only by necessity, and only to those highly trusted. Books that contain obscenities, such as Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, Plautus, Terence, Horace, Martial, Antonio Gallus and Ovid, except de rictibus, Ponto and Metamorphosis, and similar ones, whether in Latin or the vernacular, are to be kept apart. Only those that have been censored can be kept in public. In no way can permission to read them be granted to students, nor to anyone who can be harmed by them. Rectors can allow their reading to highly trusted individuals who would benefit from studying the humanities. Rectors must get rid of Virgil's *Priapeya* and other similar epigrams, they cannot be kept.

Schools and communities must get rid of Ruusbroec's works, Raymond Lull's *Lover and the Beloved* and other spiritual works, Saint Angela of Foligno, Gertrude, Mechthild, the revelations of Saint Bridget, and the book by Melchiodis Art of Serving God, and Tauler; they are not compatible with our Institute. They can be sold, if buyers are found. Works by Heinrich Suso, Savonarola, Osuna's alphabets, the Council of Cologne, Saint John Climacus and Rosetum, are to be kept under lock and key in Toledo, Alcala, Murcia and Plasencia. Other schools and communities must send them to one of these. They are not gathered because they are bad, but because they are incompatible with our institute. Pedro Leturia, *Estudios Ignacianos* (Roma: Institutum Historicum S. I, 1957), 372.

<sup>81</sup> "lo verdaderamente nuevo son las contrapistas que se ponen a los autores misticos" Leturia, "Lecturas asceticas" *Estudios Ignacianos*, 313.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 313. *Las Fuentes De Los Ejercicios Espirituales De San Ignacio. Actas Del Simposio Internacional [Loyola, 15-19 Septiembre 1997]*, 324.

<sup>83</sup> See Endean S.J., "The Strange Style of Prayer: Mercurian, Cordeses, and Alvarez" in *The Mercurian Project*. and Abad, C. M. "Sobre la lectura indiscreta de escritos místicos" *Manresa* 32. 124 1960/3 207-222.

<sup>84</sup> Dávila, *Pláticas*, 782; Álvaro Castro Sánchez, *Franciscanos, místicos, herejes y alumbrados* (Servicio de Publicaciones, Universidad de Córdoba, 2010), 199.

<sup>85</sup> Ignatius, Letters Number 3304 and 3898, Rome, 1553.

<sup>86</sup> ibid, 128-30. Not only were these authors popular among students; Christian humanists Erasmus and Vives formed an integral part of the school curriculum that prepared Jesuits for their future ministries. Constance M Furey,

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*Erasmus, Contarini, and the Religious Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); T. O'Reilly, "Saint Ignatius Loyola and Spanish Erasmianism," *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu* 43 (1974) 301-321 (n.d.); Riber, "Erasmus, En El Índice Paulino 'Con Lulio, Sabunde y Savonarola'"; Scaduto, "Laínez e l'Índice Del 1559. Lullo, Sabunde, Savonarola, Erasmo"; Marcel Bataillon, *Erasmus Y España: Estudios Sobre La Historia Espiritual Del Siglo XVI*, 2. ed. en español, corr. y aum, Sección De Obras De Historia (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966); Valenciana Biblioteca, *Humanismo Y Reforma En El S. XVI* (Valencia: Biblioteca Valenciana, 2002).

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> *The Mercurian Project*, 35.

<sup>89</sup> Youssef El Alaoui, *Jesuites, Morisques Et Indiens: Étude Comparative Des Méthodes D'évangélisation De La Compagnie De Jésus D'après Les Traités De José De Acosta (1588) Et d'Ignacio De Las Casas (1605-1607)* (Paris: H. Champion, 2006). Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford University Press, 2008), 100.

<sup>91</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits, Cambridge Companions to Religion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>92</sup> Jean Krynen, *Saint Jean De La Croix Et L'aventure De La Mystique Espagnole*, *Mystique Chrétienne et Théologie Moderne* no 20 (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1990), 257.

<sup>93</sup> Stephen Haliczzer also notes a similar transition in post-Tridentine and Baroque Spain, including Jesuits as a major spearheader of such a transition. See Haliczzer, *Sexuality in the Confessional*.

<sup>94</sup> John W O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 141. See also Elizabeth Rhodes "Join the Jesuits, See the World: Early Women in Spain and the Society of Jesus" in John W. O'Malley S.J. ed. *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

<sup>95</sup> Ignacio Iparraguirre, *Historia De La Práctica De Los Ejercicios Espirituales De San Ignacio De Loyola* (Bilbao: El Mensajero del Corazón de Jesús, 1946), 225.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Marc Rastoin, "From Windfall to Fall: the Conversos in the Society of Jesus" in *Friends on the Way: Jesuits Encounter Contemporary Judaism*, 1st ed, Abrahamic Dialogues Series (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007). See also *Jesuit Books in the Low Countries 1540-1773: A Selection from the Maurits Sabbe Library* (Leuven: Maurits Sabbebibliotheek, Faculteit Godgeleerdheid, 2009). Further support for this thesis comes from Thomas Cohen's "Racial and ethnic minorities in the Society of Jesus," See Gemma Simmonds, "Women Jesuits?" and Thomas Cohen, "Racial and ethnic minorities in the Society of Jesus" *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits, Cambridge Companions to Religion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>98</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable, Religion and Postmodernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 156. Thomas Betteridge, *Borders and Travelers in Early Modern Europe* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007),

<sup>99</sup> Iparraguirre, 113.

<sup>100</sup> Endean, *Directories*, 306.

<sup>101</sup> Endean, *Directories*, 109.

<sup>102</sup> Sicroff, 282, 182.

<sup>103</sup> Maryks, *The Jesuit Order as a Synagogue of Jews*, 123.

<sup>104</sup> *For Matters of Greater Moment: The First Thirty Jesuit General Congregations: A Brief History and a Translation of the Decrees*, 1st ed., Series I--Jesuit primary sources, in English translations no. 12 (St. Louis, Mo: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1994), 204.

<sup>105</sup> Medina, 691.

*The Mercurian Project*, 793.

<sup>106</sup> Alvarez, 151.

<sup>107</sup> *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599* Martin E. Palmer, trans. and ed. (St. Louis Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

<sup>108</sup> Palmer, 132.

<sup>109</sup> Cordeses had to defend against these when he writes to a cardinal asking for intervention against those who calumny them as "being dishonest" and "having a pact with the devil." Quote from Alvaro Huerga, *Los Alumbrados De Sevilla (1605-1630)*, Publicaciones de La Fundación Universitaria Española 31 (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, Seminario Cisneros, 1988), 619.

<sup>110</sup> Palmer, 132



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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. 133.

<sup>112</sup> *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599* Martin E. Palmer, trans. and ed. (St. Louis Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>114</sup> Iparraguirre, 493.

<sup>115</sup> Iparraguirre, 185.

<sup>116</sup> 242, Cf. *Mercurian Project*, 23.

<sup>117</sup> Donnell, 34.

<sup>118</sup> Francois Soyer, *Ambiguous Gender in Early Modern Spain and Portugal: Inquisitors, Doctors and the Transgression of Gender Norms* (BRILL, 2012), 18, 20.

<sup>119</sup> Donnell, 121. Youssef El Alaoui, *Jésuites, Morisques Et Indiens: Étude Comparative Des Méthodes D'évangélisation De La Compagnie De Jésus D'après Les Traités De José De Acosta (1588) Et d'Ignacio De Las Casas (1605-1607)* (Paris: H. Champion, 2006). Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> For a scholarship review see Antonio Domínguez Ortiz "Felipe II y las minorías marginadas" in *La Monarquía De Felipe II* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 2003). See also José María Perceval, *Todos Son Uno: Arquetipos, Xenofobia Y Racismo: La Imagen Del Morisco En La Monarquía Española Durante Los Siglos XVI Y XVII* (Almería: Instituto de Estudios Almerienses, 1997). See also M. E Perry, "The 'Nefarious Sin' in Early Modern Seville," *Journal of Homosexuality* 16, no. 1 (1989): 67–90.

<sup>121</sup> An online version of the entire text available at <http://sacred-texts.com/chr/seil/index.htm>. The Second Week meditation available at <http://sacred-texts.com/chr/seil/seil16.htm>

<sup>122</sup> *Masculinity in the Reformation Era*, 120.

<sup>123</sup> Winfried Schleiner, "That Matter Which Ought Not To Be Heard Of": Homophobic Slurs in Renaissance Cultural Politics," *Journal of Homosexuality* 26, no. 4 (1994): 41–75, 48.

Sidney Donnell, *Feminizing the Enemy: Imperial Spain, Transvestite Drama, and the Crisis of Masculinity* (Lewisburg [Pa.]: Bucknell University Press, 2003); Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S Hutcheson, *Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, Series Q (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); *Queer Renaissance Historiography: Backward Gaze, Queer Interventions* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009), 121. Check —Olior J. Thatcher, *The Library of Original Sources: Volume V (9th to 16th Century)* (The Minerva Group, Inc., 2004), 180, with modifications. For a revised translation see *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English Translation of the Official Latin Texts* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 7.



## A Jesuit Mystic's Feminine Melancholia: Jean-Joseph Surin SJ (1600-1665)

Juan M. Marin

*This essay on the mysticism of exorcist Jean-Joseph Surin suggests that the depression from which he suffered can be understood as a destabilization of the masculine identity he wished to uphold when his experience was dismissed as "feminine melancholia." By incorporating the suffering of two women he is led into a fluid state in which his relation to the divine will become erotic. The inquiry concludes by juxtaposing feminist psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva's views on melancholia with those of Surin's, bringing into a dialogue these two perspectives.*

One day in 1645, French Jesuit priest Jean-Joseph Surin, who some years earlier became famous for delivering from demonic possession the nuns at the convent of Loudun, tried to kill himself by jumping out of a second floor window. The scene at the end of the film *The Exorcist* (1971), where the Jesuit priest defeats the devil by assenting to become possessed and then committing suicide by throwing himself out the window, down the stairs, is based on Surin's life. The only difference is that Surin survived, only to fall victim to depression. The real aftermath of the story would not have made a captivating Hollywood ending.

The extraordinary events that led to Surin's despair were popularized by Aldous Huxley in his *The Devils of Loudun* (1952) and by Ken Russell in the film, *The Devils* (1973). They focus on the lurid aspects of the story. Early modern France was rife with beliefs in demonic activity, so when the relationship between priest Urbain Grandier and the nuns at Loudun, especially the superior Jeanne des Anges, acquires erotic overtones, he is accused of bringing the devil into the convent. He is burned at the stake on charges of witchcraft, while chaos reigns among the nuns who behave erratically, acting out symptoms indicating possession such as rage and increased libido. Perhaps because of its sensationalist appropriations for popular consumption, these events reflecting an important element in the mindset of seventeenth century France have been little studied. The only scholarly study of the Grandier and des Anges case is Michel de Certeau's *The Possession at Loudun* (2000).<sup>1</sup> While de Certeau exposes the fraudulent activities of those involved and the dangerous superstitions of spectators, he also claims that there is an 'otherness' element that cannot be approached with the historian's tool or reduced to socio-cultural circumstances. As the modern editor of Surin's works, de Certeau is also aware of the forgotten drama of the Jesuit's life after the Loudun episode. Surin's autobiography has not been studied in depth, so its riches remain unearthed.<sup>2</sup>

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In his autobiography, *Triumph of Divine Love Over the Powers of Hell*, and in its more theological sequel *Experimental Science of Otherworldly Matters*, Surin narrates how he overcame his own demonic possession, which for twenty years led him to believe that he had lost the love of Christ and was damned for eternity. We learn that after he exorcised mother superior Jeanne des Anges, he was thrown into a despair that alternated with occasional moments of mystical consolation. In the books he defends himself against the accusation that his mystical experience is nothing but 'feminine' melancholia. We will see that Surin's mystical melancholia indeed becomes feminized as understood at the time. Moreover, his own masculine identity mutates in a mystical relationship with the divine that subverts preconceived notions of gender stability. Only then was he able to surmount his depression and attain the joy he longed for.

In this essay I will argue that Surin's melancholia involves an incorporation of the suffering of two women. He assimilates the suffering of Jeanne des Anges, transforming it into an erotic and ecstatic joy, by identifying both Jeanne and himself with the longing and mystical ecstasy he found in the writings of Teresa of Avila. His relation with these two women shapes his own experience of demonic possession and affective mysticism, both of which were dismissed by many of his contemporaries as feminine disturbances. I will conclude by engaging Surin's views on melancholia in dialogue with those of feminist psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva. Kristeva's work will allow us to gain some insights into Surin's melancholia. At the same time Surin's text will offer us the possibility of extending Kristeva's theory, escaping the temptation to reduce Surin's lived experience to psychoanalytic phenomena. Suspending a final judgment on these issues will be a sign of respect for that 'otherness' that de Certeau encountered and which now the reader will confront.

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It was in 1633, during the reign of Louis the Just, while Cardinal Richelieu was prime minister of France's government and doing very illustrious things for the good of the Church and State that Our Lord allowed a terrible attack from Hell to happen at the town of Loudun. (Surin, 1990, p. 11)

Thus begins Surin's recollection of the events at the convent of Loudun that led to his spiritual malaise. Here he frames his text within a specific historical context, so that future readers will not dismiss his terrifying narration as product of his own fantasy or that of addled women, and within a theological context, so that these events described will be seen as part of a divine plan.

Surin encases the episode within the ecclesiastical renewal and invigoration program that Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642) was leading. Church and throne were allied at this time, forming a bulwark against Protestant incursions. Religious orders flourished under regal support, so anything that happened at the convent of Loudun was a matter of state. Indeed, the events quickly became a national affair.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Surin's acknowledging the church and state is relegated to the introduction. His involvement in

the affair was not related to a desire for fame. His incursion was for him but a sign of his belief that his life was guided by divine providence.

Surin arrives on the scene as reinforcement in a battle in which several exorcists had failed to deliver the nuns from the evil beings that had taken control of them. Surin tells us that it was believed that the origin of the possession was some kind of sexual magic performed by corrupt priest Urban Grandier that led to "carnal love." Surin wants to tell the whole story and say that demonic hatred was more at fault than any kind of "love." His goal is to show how this hatred was counteracted by God's love for these women. Writing in the third person, Surin says that "because of the misery of their condition, God gave him such a great love for them that, seeing them, he was not able to stop himself from shedding copious tears or from being moved by a strong desire to help them" (1990, p. 20). He discovers that the possession is centered on the convent's superior, Jeanne des Anges. His desire to be of help to them will be linked to his intense desire for God; yet, these desires will also be accompanied by sexual desire, which, as we shall see, will be an element in the spiritual battle against the demonic forces. The struggle for Jeanne des Anges' soul will foreshadow what will happen in his own for the next twenty years.

When Surin met Jeanne des Anges, she suffered symptoms that many at the time would have interpreted as those arising from melancholic humors, yet he ascribes them to a demonic attack. He tells us that that the devil threw her

through malignant operations, not only in a great spiritual loathing, but also in such bodily languidness that she seemed to be dying; her face became emaciated and diminished, her spirit dull-minded, her heart overwhelmed. She found everything insipid. Her will was entirely in God, but her powers were so blunted that she could barely pay attention to what she was told. (Surin, 1990, p. 106)

Since Surin was interested in demonology he probably knew from his readings in the subject that these symptoms did not necessarily arise from supernatural causes. He could have learned from influential demonologist and philosopher Marsilio Ficino (d. 1499) that an abundance of black bile "makes the spirits heavier and colder, afflicts the mind continually with weariness, dulls the sharpness of the intellect, and keeps the blood from leaping around the Arcadian's [melancholic's] heart" (quoted in Radden, 2000, p. 92). We can see all these signs in the description above. Another influential demonologist, Johann Weyer, in his *Of Deceiving Demons* (1562), claims that "many persons beset by melancholia are thought to be possessed, and vice versa ... so there is need for careful judgment here, to distinguish between the two afflictions (which are often found together in many instances)" (quoted in Radden, 2000, p. 104).

Throughout his book, Weyer leans towards the view that melancholia is more often caused by imbalances in bodily humors that resulted in symptoms such as those of Jeanne des Anges above. Even in the case of demonic possession, the devil takes advantage of a natural imbalance instead of being the cause for it. This was often the case with women whose humors made them more susceptible to demonic activity:

that crafty schemer the Devil thus influences the female sex, that sex which by reason of temperament is inconstant, credulous, wicked, uncontrolled in spirit, and because of its feelings and affections, which it governs only with difficulty melancholic; he especially seduces stupid, worn-out, unstable old women. (Quoted in Radden, 2000, p. 98)

Weyer is here repeating common assumptions of the time. Surin knows from his ministerial relationship with Jeanne that these negative prejudices do not apply to her. His admiration for her is revealed throughout the text. "The natural disposition of this woman was excellent from the spiritual side, very strong; her temper was gentle, her judgment solid, yet she was very weak in health" (Surin, 1990, p. 23). Rather than describe des Anges as melancholic, Surin prefers to use the term *acedia*. He defines *acedia* as

a heaviness opposed to the spirit of fervor through which the Devil slips all the vices.... Its poison consists in a deadening that he leaks into the senses, making the soul desire repose, allowing itself to slip into a restive state, into a vague entrainment of thoughts, a blunted and sorrowful demeanor. (Surin, 1990, p. 94)

The early modern scholars above would have seen these symptoms described by Surin as a case of melancholia. Even today a psychoanalyst could make this interpretation. We will return to this but, briefly jumping ahead for the purpose of comparison, we find Kristeva defining melancholia as "the institutional symptomatology of inhibition and asymbolia that becomes established now and then or chronically in a person, alternating more often than not with the so called manic phase of exaltation" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 9). We can see how Jeanne's *acedia* fits the first half of this definition. Kristeva's asymbolia shows up when Jeanne's "powers" become "blunted" and she is lost in an entrainment of thoughts that she cannot communicate. She becomes inhibited, a "deadening" invading her mind, with the result that she cannot pay attention to what is spoken to her. Later, Surin will tell us that this behavior will alternate with moments of intense rage in which powerful demons take control of her. Kristeva's "manic phase of exaltation" shows up here, making the argument for melancholia seem uncontested. But for now let us stay with Surin's approach, which I will later compare to Kristeva's.

Surin's diagnosis is that a demonic manifestation in the form of *acedia* needs to be confronted here through the ritual of exorcism. Surin's main weapon is prayer. A favorite weapon of the devil is lust. A battle will ensue in which Surin believes that he vanquishes the demon, yet "the enemy returns and becomes sensible in the same shape of a serpent, coiling itself among the members and biting in order to take away repose and disturb purity" (Surin, 1990, p. 37). Surin finds himself tempted to sin against chastity, so he finds a remedy by "turning to the Holy Virgin and imagining her with the child Jesus as he had seen her in paintings" (Surin, 1990, p. 37). This last method was promoted by the Jesuits as a way of confronting the demon of lust. Surin's honesty reveals the reliability of the text as a personal account, since from the beginning he wanted to distance the possession from being connected to "carnal love." We do not know the object of his lust but it seems justified to assume that it was Jeanne des Anges. Love for the mother superior, showing

itself in its “spiritual” and “carnal” aspects, would become the basis for his later identification with her, as discussed below.

Surin and Jeanne together fight the demonic serpent. “She felt something come out from her head something that exhausted her, and saw in front of her a terrifying monster like a dragon ... she bravely strikes at it and suddenly it disappears, after which she found herself free” (Surin, 1990, p. 107). This successful battle against one of the demons strengthens them both to fight the Devil himself, who finally leaves her when, some time later, he receives the Eucharist from Surin. Thus ends Jeanne’s possession and, after a few days, Surin’s will begin.

Surin’s identification with the woman he loved enough to battle the Devil with her became so strong that after the exorcism he assimilated many of her symptoms. The price of delivering Jeanne des Anges from her suffering had been not only taking the suffering upon himself, but also inviting the demon to accept him as a hostage in exchange. He recalls that at one moment during the exorcism he felt carried by an ardor, wishing to “participate in all her temptations and miseries, even to the point of becoming possessed by the evil Spirit, provided that He gave him the freedom to enter her and devote himself to her soul” (Surin, 1990, p. 27). This wish to be one with Jeanne was granted to the extreme that the identification became complete. The signs of demonic possession did not take long to show up after the exorcism. He began to feel that he had become separated from God. Christ had abandoned and left him at the mercy of the Devil, his soul forever lost:

he lost the ability to communicate, becoming mute for seven months without being able to say Mass, read, or write. He was not able to dress or undress himself, or make any kind of movement. He fell into a malady unknown to doctors, their remedies having no effect. (Surin, 1990, p. 119)

Inhibition and asymbolia show up in Surin’s inability to act and in his mutism, which will occasionally be disrupted by exalted mystical moments in which he felt consoled by God:

At Loudun he began to receive, during the time of his obsession, communications from God that worked in his soul consoling it greatly with ardent spiritual fires. Every one of these days they would show themselves in such a way that he was not able to doubt that they came from God, surpassing all natural forces. (Surin, 1990, p. 170)

We can see in these two passages a new occurrence of melancholia. The claim that his malady was unknown to his doctors is Surin’s interpretation. Although in the passage above he is careful to mention that it surpassed all natural forces, midway through his text he admits that “most people, even the wisest, tended to say that it was nothing but a melancholic humor or devotional illusion, or fantasy” (Surin, 1990, p. 221). Although at the end of his narrative he will accept that melancholy is somehow involved, he will give his condition a supernatural origin. He believes this because “he had read many things from mystical writers about their inner sufferings” (Surin, 1990, p. 175) and saw how similar his

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state was to theirs. He finds precedent for his despair and his consolations and “ardent spiritual fires” in these writers. But before he can describe his mysticism, he must address the charge that his experience is nothing but feminine melancholia.

Besides their autobiographical intention, *Triumph* and *Science* are part of a series of works in which Surin defends mystical theology from clerical colleagues who dismiss it as the fervid imagination of “little women” (*femmelettes*). One of the priests Surin writes against derides those “devout melancholics and mystics” who have their “castle in Spain” (de Certeau, 1963, p. 45). This last reference is an attack on the increasing influence of the writings of Teresa of Avila, specially her *Life* and the *Interior Castle*.<sup>4</sup> Surin, as we will see, was strongly influenced by Teresa, and yet he felt the need to defend himself in *Triumph* against the feminization of mystical experiences.

These are not the sweetness gustos of “little women” (*femmelettes*). Many thinking and wise men have contempt for these [experiences] and compare them to the tears and sensibilities of some women. This is something else. These are spiritual experiences, real and efficacious, that hearten the soul, a demonstration of God and divine things. Truly they are much more than sweetnesses. (Surin, 1990, p. 325)

Surin here defends mystical theology by turning not to its origin, as he does elsewhere, but to its fruits, such as consolation in the midst of despair and knowledge of the divine. Yet, as an attempt to avoid a feminization of mystical experience, Surin’s text is a failure. His mysticism arises out of identification with Jeanne des Anges, which will then be exchanged for identification with Teresa of Avila. Although he defends his arguments by turning to the authority of the Church fathers, he extracts from them the message that “a simple *femmelette* can love God more than the greatest doctor in the world” (Surin, 1990, p. 226). We will see that Surin not only defends these *femmelettes* but become one of them.

In other more systematic treatises, Surin refers to most of the fathers of the church; yet, except for Paul, the attention given to Teresa surpasses by far the energy he dedicates to patristic writers. So it is no surprise that in *Triumph* and *Science*, Teresa has an important role. During his melancholic phase, Surin’s identification became so extreme that his more intense attacks occurred during Teresa’s holy day:

sometimes I became a desperate soul, like the fifteenth of October, day of Saint Theresa. She is a saint for whom I have great affection. That day, as in every year on the day of her holy day, my disposition changes and I was brought down to the verge of death. (Surin, 1990, p. 233)

Surin felt himself this day at the “entrance of ancient darkness,” repeating a motif that appears throughout the text, his being found guilty and condemned to hell. The reference to the dark entrance recalls Teresa’s transport to a place in hell, which she believed was reserved for her as punishment for her sins. In this vision she found herself at the “entrance of a long and strait tunnel ending in a deep, dark, and narrow oven” (Teresa de

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Avila, 1998, p. 299). In that place, "there was no light but only obscure darkness" (Teresa de Avila, 1998, p. 300). This episode is narrated after Teresa describes, in the previous chapter, her struggle with demons and despair. On Teresa's holy day, Surin again attempts suicide by jumping out of the window, but is unable to do so because he had broken his leg during the earlier attempt.

On a later fifteenth of October he also experienced great anxiety, yet he was able to engage in ministry. In order to do this he availed himself of his desire for God to give him the strength to perform his preaching service. He was able to break his silence temporarily. He says, "the good words that came from my mouth emerged, despite the despair, from the deep desire that my heart had for God" (Surin, 1990, p. 234). The desire that strengthens him is linked later with the presence of Teresa:

His frailty was extreme, yet nevertheless he was as if elevated in spirit. He saw in front of him, written in the air with large letters, the words PURE LOVE. Beside them was written: TERESA OF JESUS. At that moment he thought that Saint Teresa was present, as if she had come from the heavens, which seemed to be opening, a clearing that forestalled the thunderstorm. (Surin, 1990, p. 271)

In the midst of his desperation he holds to the figure of Teresa. We can read the appearance of these words as representing his movement towards escaping the silence in which he had been submerged.

After this vision he had the desire to rest, so he returned to his chamber. As soon as he lay down a memory of Jeanne des Anges surfaced. He recalled how years earlier at Loudun, on a fifteenth of October, he had a vision of a suffering Christ. The same vision was happening now. Here then a transition occurs, initiated by memories of Teresa and Jeanne, from a damning Christ to identification with Christ's suffering:

I had an impression of suffering Christ. I was fastened to my inner center, and found myself as if crucified for three hours. The first hour the agony was so extreme that I could not do anything. This mystery happened in my spirit and my body, as if I had just been nailed. (Surin, 1990, p. 330)

In the next two hours he shares Christ's suffering. This was but one of several moments in which his body becomes the place where his desire for Christ is manifested. Christ becomes the divine "spouse." His suffering is then transformed into joy in an erotic mystical encounter with the beloved:

when I was on my bed, I felt something descend over me. I was penetrated, as a sponge would be, by a liquid from heaven that infused everything and gave me an indescribable joy and sweetness. There was such a release of melancholy, about which nothing can be said. Then, in a short-lived moment, it seemed that my soul was in glory. (Surin, 1990, p. 271)



Here we find the final stage of Surin's melancholy. What first began as the incorporation of Jeanne des Anges' melancholia is then distilled until only desire remained. The suffering dissipates. Erotic desire is not denied but transformed into something divine. The sexual aspect of mysticism is not metaphorized by Surin but accepted:

there can be something of this sweetness among married couples, which regulated by nature's order itself, and following God's design, have such an intimate bond and closeness of heart that it cannot be better expressed than the relationship between God and the soul. (Surin, 1990, p. 331)

In the passage above, Surin attempts to re-inscribe the eroticism of his experiences within divinely inspired heterosexual social structures. But the description of his mystical encounters betrays the fact that the process of feminization which began with melancholia only accelerated when it became mystical. Had Surin been a woman, his mystical text may have been dismissed as another case of female hysteria. As a male who not only accepts the authors of this tradition of female mysticism as authoritative,<sup>5</sup> but incorporates their spirituality into his own, Surin is subverting gender in a way that some ecclesiastical authorities found threatening. At least one of his texts will be found in inquisitors' lists. Near the end of Surin's lifetime his own superiors would censor his writings (Surin, 1990, p. 340). We can discern in Surin's apologetical passages how hostile his environment was to female spirituality, so it is not surprising that his text was controversial. But by then Surin's experience of the loss and regaining of Christ will make him immune to such a lesser loss as that of reputation. If it was God's will, he was happy to "die in shame as did his Son" (Surin, 1990, p. 341). His identification with Jeanne and Teresa, and now with Christ, strengthened him to face any future loss.

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It is tempting to reduce Surin's experience to just another case of melancholia. If we return to Kristeva's definition of melancholia, we can see that every one of its signs occurs in Surin's case. Recalling Kristeva's definition, melancholia can be described as "the institutional symptomatology of inhibition and asymbolia that becomes established now and then or chronically in a person, alternating more often than not with the manic phase of exaltation" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 9). As we saw above, Surin identified Jeanne des Anges' melancholic inhibition as an attack by the demon of *acedia*. With regard to his own inhibition, he admitted that melancholia was involved. This state, which became asymbolic when he lost the ability to speak, was broken only in those manic phases of exaltation he called mystical. Kristeva's investigations about the causes of melancholia can therefore shed some light on Surin's text. Yet, reading the latter only in the light of the former will give us a skewed perspective. Kristeva's work does not arise from an objective as opposed to Surin's subjective approach. Her text on melancholia, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1989), like Surin's, was written after an experience of loss.<sup>6</sup> Rather than

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seeing psychoanalysis as the method and the mystic as the subject, I will engage both of them in a dialogue about the loss of an object of desire which can be both male and female.

Kristeva extends the definition of melancholia to include as essential a “mourning for the maternal object.” After birth, all human beings begin a process of separation from the mother that will establish a precedent for all subsequent experiences of loss. The maternal “object” is more like a “preobject.” The individual’s relationship with this preobject will determine how his or her future object relationships will develop, including what the reaction will be in the case of the loss of an object of love. In her work, Kristeva discusses texts written by melancholic mystics whose experiences of loss express, in her view, a longing for reunification with the mother. She will tell us that “those in despair are mystics – adhering to the preobject, not believing in Thou, but mute and steadfast devotees of their own inexpressible container” (Kristeva, 1989, p. 14). Like Surin, these mystics believed that the divine Thou was no longer present for them. What for Kristeva is longing for a return to the maternal container, the womb, is for these mystics a longing to return to the love of God. In Christianity the mystic’s loss has been represented as the loss of the figure of God in Christ. Surin would not agree with reducing this experience to loss of the mother. On the other hand, we can speculate that he may not completely dismiss Kristeva’s text. As he does in the following poem, written after the events discussed previously, he might identify the longing for a mother as longing for a maternal God who is none other than Christ the beloved.

The Soul, from a glorious fire saintly hurled,  
carries deeply within her thoughts the arrow of Love.  
She seeks from her God the gentle embrace  
that will assuage her pain and her banishment.  
At the point of approaching the royal chambers  
of the lamb that awaits her as a loyal bridegroom,  
she sings of deeds of love and of severe trials,  
of the evils that have made her sigh down here below.  
Yet, beloved Love, when she sets foot upon your path  
she wants to speak so that the world will listen:

When God emerged from the depths of his majesty  
his power saw herself pregnant.  
Water, earth, and sky, the whole vast sphere,  
were the unconstrained fruit of this Love.  
Then, when she pulled out the world from her side,  
she placed each thing in its appropriate space.  
Love insinuates himself everywhere  
in this great universe that he has designed  
through a secret instinct, forceful and benign.  
He joins every member together with its neighbor,  
desiring to join through strife

the highest with the lowest, the heavens with the earth,  
and making co-exist through enchanting attractions  
the opposed forces of diverse elements. (Surin, 1957, p. 61)

Surin recounts here again how the melancholia discharged when his banishment was revoked was assuaged by an encounter with the divine bridegroom. Adopting a female stance while awaiting the male Christ, the mystic tells of the soul's sorrows. Yet, the soul's pain is transformed into joy as she recalls the majesty of Love, who alternates between being male and female. The gender destabilization that Surin experienced during his trials is now attributed to a divine maternal figure, Love. Through the "strife" of the experience of suffering something new can be created. Love heals the rupture of an original loss that separated heaven from earth. Love reverses through attraction what has been divided into high and low, masculine and feminine. For Surin, love can attain what for Kristeva is impossible: a return to a both masculine and feminine mother in an erotic embrace.

Surin believed that he gained insights of God only through the experience of God's absence. What Kristeva refers to as 'mystic atheism' can make sense within Surin's worldview. For Kristeva the absence experienced in loss is not only absence of an object but absence of names to refer to that object:

Let me say that this sacred, this "thing without a name" may betray, beyond the depressive silences of our mystic, a suggestion of disbelief. In fact if the divine has no name, does it truly exist? One may believe in it, one may also doubt it. The latencies of a mystic atheism (perhaps the only one, which has nothing to do with the atheistic religion of the so-called materialist intellectuals I told you about last time), and, I think, of a subtle, specifically feminine atheism, take root, it seems to me, in that suspicion borne aloft on the powers of the Word, in that retreat to the unfathomable continent, concealed from the sensible body. (Clément and Kristeva, 2001, p. 37)

Kristeva refers here to doubts about a divine presence that would support the meaning of it all. This meaning is lost in the midst of depression, such as that which led Surin to admit that "although a profession of atheism is not an ordinary thing among Christians, nevertheless it is a temptation that can be conceived in the spirit" (Surin, 1990, p. 343). Kristeva would read Surin's atheism as feminine because of Surin's attraction towards those female aspects of erotic motherhood. This passage from Kristeva is a discussion of the experience of another mystic, Angela of Foligno, who suffered because of the distance between her and God. Surin's atheism arises out of this distance he calls damnation, which he exemplifies by turning also to Angela. Kristeva sees Angela as a melancholic who is "suspicious" of the possibility of using language, the "powers of the Word" to bridge the divide between God's presence and the soul. Surin finds in the authority of the "Blessed Angela" a refusal to fall into the temptation of depressive atheism by accepting the loss in damnation as part of the relationship with God. As he quotes her: "If he wishes to damn me, may he damn me immediately" (Surin, 1963, p. 306). Angela's, and Surin's, love for

God is so intense that they are willing to give up God and be damned for the sake of God. The pain of the absence of the object of desire is a price to pay for the joy brought about when that object was present.

Surin knew that love requires sacrifice, having to go through despair on behalf of another. He claims that in order to bridge the divine-human divide that Kristeva mentions, the soul must go through purgatory and hell before encountering the divine bridegroom in spiritual marriage (Surin, 1963, p. 297). Love of human beings can require just as much. In Surin's life the loss of Christ followed immediately upon the threat of the loss of Jeanne des Anges' soul. Her spiritual death was a possibility that he could not tolerate. Kristeva believes that it is such a threat that can lead to mystical ecstasy: "In the place of death and so as not to die of the other's death, I bring forth – or at least I rate highly – an artifice, an ideal, a 'beyond' that my psyche produces in order to take up a position outside itself – ekstasis" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 99). She proposes understanding the melancholic individual as creating a loved other, divine or imagined, in order to escape having to die of the despair caused by the loss of a loved one. But we saw that Surin extends Kristeva by pushing further the individual "I" into a relation with another, into a "we" that is not produced by the psyche. His relation with a damning Christ may have been an artifice created by the fear of loss; but the ecstasy of his subjective encounter with Christ becomes nevertheless real when it is directed towards inter-subjective relations with others, as he himself believed it did. Surin emphasizes: "It is necessary to point out again that all these forces that come to the soul from love, lead particularly to charity for the neighbor" (Surin, 1990, p. 291). This imperative does not cease during ecstasy since "during these operations of grace he felt a singular instinct of love for souls" (Surin, 1990, p.290). He was ready to "die of the other's death." He accepted with equanimity that he would have to go through hell for Jeanne des Anges. But after his damning experience the possibility of peace returning still remains. In his case melancholia disappeared and the ecstatic joy of love was his again.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For historical documents describing the events prior to Surin's arrival see de Certeau (2000). After writing the article, my attention was drawn to a study of demonic possession in early modern France up to, but not including, the events at Loudun. See Ferber (2004).

<sup>2</sup> Aside from de Certeau's works, scholarship on Surin is scant. De Certeau's main work on Surin, his doctoral thesis, has not been published. For a linguistic approach to some of the issues I am discussing here see de Certeau (1986, pp. 91-93, 101-15). I am aware of only two other studies, both Christian theological. See Breton (1985) and Myle (1979).

<sup>3</sup> For more on the social and political aspects see de Certeau (2000).

<sup>4</sup> For an account of her influence in seventeenth century France see de Certeau (1992).

<sup>5</sup> In his texts, especially his *Guide*, Surin uses as authoritative sources not only patristic ones but also women's mystical writings. Among the women most often mentioned, besides Teresa of Avila, we find Catherine of Siena, Angela of Foligno, Catherine of Genoa, Gertrude of Helfta, and Magdalene de Pazzi.

<sup>6</sup> As Kristeva tells us, "[my research] is very much based on my personal development, on my biography, and on the historical processes that I have lived through, whether these be intellectual movements...or my own experience of maternity" (quoted in Margaroni & Lechte, 2004, p.144). Discussing her own post-partum depression, Kristeva writes: "Discovering autonomy and authority allows you to work with your own suffering and to grant it a discourse – not in an autoerotic or self-enclosed way, but in a way that enables you to connect with other people" (1996, p.10).

Juan M. Marin  
Harvard Divinity School, 45 Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138/USA  
e: jmarin@hds.harvard.edu

## **MYSTICAL THEOLOGY IN THE EARLY JESUIT MISSION TO COLONIAL PARAGUAY**

### **Contemplation and Action at the Hispanic-American Frontier**

*Juan Miguel Marin*

**N**EAR THE BEGINNING OF THE FILM *The Mission* we are introduced to Father Gabriel, a Jesuit who is depicted as embodying many of the qualities often attributed to mystics. Somewhere in the jungles of colonial South America we find Gabriel praying, something he often does throughout the movie, before ascending the mountain that will lead him to his goal: bringing Christ to a remote tribe. Gabriel is presented as withdrawn, ethereal and frequently engaged in contemplation. In contrast, the tempestuous Father Rodrigo is portrayed as the man of action. A former soldier, Rodrigo will identify with the indigenous people to the point of taking up arms in order to defend them against the cruelty of the colonisers. Gabriel, on the other hand, rejects confrontation with the oppressors and chooses to flee with the tribe to safer ground. Rodrigo will train those who remain in the arts of war. Gabriel will insist that God is love. Rodrigo will remind him that God demands justice.

The conflict between the two priests obscures the fact that one of the Jesuits who inspired the film's plot, Antonio Ruiz de Montoya (1585–1652), integrated Gabriel's contemplation and Rodrigo's action in a single individual. Like Gabriel he lived a rich mystical life, even writing a treatise on contemplative prayer. But he also organized a massive flight of indigenous people in order to escape slaughter at the hands of colonisers. Like Rodrigo, he struggled against colonial oppression by securing from the Spanish king the right for the native people to bear arms. His participation in international controversies

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concerning the fate of indigenous people set a precedent for what would later be called human rights.

Here I want to explore how Montoya's active life was infused by his mysticism. I will place him in the context of the early Jesuit mission to Peru and Paraguay by discussing the mystical theology of the time, and especially of his predecessor, Diego Alvarez de Paz. A look at how his younger Jesuit brother Francisco del Castillo followed in his footsteps will provide us with another example of the way in which contemplation and action were integrated on the South American frontier.

### ***Mystical Theology in Early Modern Spain***

The word 'mystical' is often reserved today for unusual or mysterious phenomena which tend to surround specific individuals. In the Roman Catholic imagination, 'mystics' have been seen as saintly men and women who received the grace of having an extraordinary relationship with God. Sixteenth-century Spain had more than its fair share of these mystics, most famously Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross and Ignatius of Loyola.

Yet in sixteenth-century Spain an understanding of mystical theology and contemplation was born that is quite different from contemporary misconceptions. Mystical theology, as Teresa and John taught it, was not an esoteric discipline but a prayer exercise in which discursive thought is left behind in order to make space for a loving encounter with God. Many at this time saw the centuries-old tradition of mystical theology as accessible only from within a contemplative lifestyle that required a monastic environment separate from the world. But Ignatius and his followers successfully challenged this requirement by showing how a contemplative vocation does not demand disengagement from an active life in ministry. The role that mystical theology should play in the nascent Society of Jesus, however, would be the cause of some controversy. While some Jesuits held that this non-discursive and ecstatic style of prayer was alien to the ministry-orientated prayer taught by Ignatius, others claimed that, nourished by sources from the mystical tradition, they were better able to serve others in their ministries.

While these views were being debated in Spain, Jesuits in Paraguay were establishing a mission where, years later, they would be put to the

test. Would mystical theology, born in a monastic context, be possible to practise in the precarious situation of this recently discovered frontier, and be able to produce fruits in the ministerial care of souls?

The tradition of mystical theology can be traced back to the writings of the fifth- or sixth-century author Pseudo-Dionysius—considered by sixteenth-century Spanish writers to be the same Dionysius who was a disciple of St Paul. The words *mystical* and *mystery* have the same root. For Pseudo-Dionysius, mystical theology was that which refers to the mysteries of God's Word. These mysteries lay beyond human comprehension. The goal of mystical theology was to achieve, through prayer, an ecstatic union with the Cause of all things.

Throughout the previous centuries, mystical theology was thought to involve an esoteric knowledge available only to consecrated religious who had enough education to delve into mystical texts. The sixteenth century in Spain marked a turning point in the history of this tradition. With the advent of the printing press and an emerging interest in translating the writings of spiritual authors into the vernacular, Spain became a fertile ground for new attitudes towards prayer. One important change was a democratization of prayer by which, since Latin was no longer required to read books on prayer, lay people could now approach these spiritual authors on their own. The discovery of prayer as an intimate encounter with God made people understand that, not only was Latin unnecessary for mystical theology, one did not even have to know how to read. Mystical theology was not theology in our sense of the word. With the help of spiritual direction anyone could practise mystical theology.

**With the help  
of spiritual  
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theology**

We find this attitude in the writing of the Benedictine abbot Garcia Jiménez de Cisneros who understood mystical theology in this way in his *Exercitatorio*, a precursor to Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. The *Exercitatorio* is Cisneros' Spanish paraphrase of spiritual sources for those without much education. It was composed in the vernacular 'because [his] intention was to make it [available] for the simple and pious and not for the arrogant and educated'.<sup>1</sup> Cisneros was the first of

<sup>1</sup> Garcia Jiménez de Cisneros, *Exercitatorio*, in *Obras completas*, volume 2 (Barcelona: Montserrat Abbey, 1965), 454 (this and later quotations from non-English texts are my translation unless otherwise stated).





St Teresa of Avila, by François Gérard

was hailed as the Doctor of Prayer. Yet she never wrote a systematic account of prayer. She uses the word *mystical* only three times. These references, which I quote in full, are in her autobiography, where we find them linked to feeling, experiencing and becoming united with God.<sup>3</sup>

... a feeling of the presence of God that in no way I could doubt that He was inside me or I totally immersed in Him. This was not in the manner of vision; I believe they call the experience 'mystical theology'. The soul is suspended in such a way that it seems to be completely outside itself. The will loves, the memory, it seems to me, is almost lost. For, as I say, the intellect does not work, but is as though amazed by all it understands, because God desires that it

many who opened up the riches of mystical spirituality to a larger audience. The Society of Jesus was the religious order that did most to disseminate Christian spirituality among lay people in Spain. But it was a Carmelite nun who became the most influential teacher of what mystical theology was all about. After her canonization, Teresa of Avila became the authority to whom, through her writings, those who wanted to learn about mystical theology first looked. Since it was her approach that influenced Montoya and Castillo I will focus upon it now.<sup>2</sup>

When St Teresa became a Doctor of the Church, she

<sup>2</sup> I discuss the following in more detail in my 'Teresa of Avila as Student and Teacher of the Dionysian tradition', *Magistra* (Winter 2007).

<sup>3</sup> St Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2008).

understand, with regard to the things that His Majesty represents to it, that it understands nothing. (10:1)

He who has had some experience will understand me, for I don't know how to describe this being raised up if it is not understood through experience. In mystical theology, which I began to describe, the intellect ceases to work because God suspends it. (12:5)

How this prayer they call union comes about and what it is I don't know how to explain. These matters are expounded in mystical theology. I wouldn't know the proper vocabulary. Neither do I understand what the mind is, nor do I know how it differs from the soul or the spirit. It all seems to be the same thing to me, although the soul sometimes goes forth from itself. The way this happens is comparable to what happens when a fire is burning and flaming, and it sometimes becomes a forceful blaze. The flame then shoots very high above the fire, but the flame is not by that reason something different from the fire, but the same flame that is in the fire .... What I'm attempting to explain is what the soul feels when it is in this divine union. What union is we already know since it means that two separate things become one. (18:2-3)

Here we find some defining characteristics of mystical theology that will also show up in Montoya's mystical text, *Silex del Divino Amor* (*Firestone of Divine Love*). Intense feeling, the dwindling of the cognitive faculties and the goal of union are all part of mystical theology as he and others practised it at the Hispanic-American frontier.

Teresa of Avila's approach to mystical theology was at first treated with mistrust by the still young Society of Jesus. Superiors in Spain were suspicious about a 'way of prayer that began to be introduced in the Society, in the province of Castilla, through the spirit and counsel of Mother Teresa of Jesus'.<sup>4</sup> This 'strange' way of prayer was being taught by Baltasar Alvarez, who had previously been Teresa's spiritual director. Alvarez' 'prayer of silence' was considered by many to be too contemplative for a religious order that prided itself on being 'contemplative in action'.<sup>5</sup> Some were afraid that if this affective prayer continued to spread, cases of 'visionarism or madness' would be produced.<sup>6</sup> Everard Mercurian, fourth Superior General of the Society

<sup>4</sup> Baltasar Alvarez, *Escritos espirituales* (Barcelona: Claraso, 1961), 150.

<sup>5</sup> For the spirituality associated with this phrase see Joseph Conwell, *Walking in the Spirit: A Reflection on Jerónimo Nadal's Phrase 'Contemplatives Likewise in Action'* (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Alvarez, *Escritos espirituales*, 145.

of Jesus, prohibited the indiscriminate reading of mystical theology texts by Jesuits, claiming that they were incompatible with the Society's goals.<sup>7</sup> Yet this is exactly what our Jesuit missionaries would put to the test.

### **Alvarez de Paz**

Among the Jesuits who were sent to the recently established Peruvian mission was Fr Diego Alvarez de Paz, a devoted student of the mystical theological tradition. Influenced by the Church Fathers and by Teresa of Avila, he wrote several volumes on contemplative prayer and the mystical path while he was at Lima, the frontier post of the Jesuit mission. In his youth he had experienced a tension between his desire for a life devoted to contemplation and his call to become a missionary. His superiors, Frs J. Atienza and José de Acosta, wrote to General Acquaviva because they were concerned about his vocation. Acquaviva's response provides us with an insight into the messy entanglement between contemplation and action that worried many Jesuits:

Father José de Acosta wrote me what he thought about Fr Diego de Paz, whose spirit is somewhat withdrawn, so as to make some think, including Fr Paz himself, that it is inappropriate to the Society. I believe this is the reason why he had some desire to join the Carthusians. I ask Your Reverence to console and encourage him in my name, letting him know that the Society will be happy if he devotes himself to study, since God has given him the talent to do so. I also ask Your Reverence to have in consideration, regarding his assignments, whatever is his inclination and whatever consoles him. The spirit of prayer, if it is not contrary to obedience and the Society's ministry, is not alien but very proper to the Society. This is how I understand the gift that God has given him, a path to religious perfection. Lack of prayer undermines the strength and being of the religious spirit.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed discussion see Philip Endean "The Strange Style of Prayer": Mercurian, Cordeses, and Alvarez', in *The Mercurian Project*, edited by Thomas M. McCoog (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2004), 351-394.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in Eduardo López Azpitarte, *La oración contemplativa: evolución y sentido en Alvarez de Paz* (Granada: Facultad de Teología, 1966), 127.

It seems that zeal for the salvation of the indigenous people had led some Jesuits to question the value of contemplation. That Acquaviva had to remind Jesuits that a spirit of prayer 'was not alien but very proper to the Society' tells us of one temptation the missionaries encountered: judging prayer as taking time and energy away from the mission. Of course, Acquaviva was aware too of another extreme view. There were also Jesuits who held contemplation to be the end of religious life. Acquaviva here emphasizes that the Jesuits must make sure that the spirit of prayer 'is not contrary to obedience and the Society's ministry'. He is hinting at the aftermath of the intra-Society controversy over the role of contemplation that was still lingering in Europe.<sup>9</sup>

Alvarez de Paz remained in Lima, where he held the posts of professor, rector and provincial.<sup>10</sup> His Carthusian leanings remained with him, yet he found his call in tempering the missionaries' zeal by warning that action without contemplation will fail to accomplish anything. His letters help us to understand the issues that the Jesuit communities were facing, as well as revealing his own views on them. In one he writes:

Without spiritual men this province would become a monstrous part of the Society, neither spiritual nor like the others. Men of spirit do not develop by being involved in trivial occupations or compelled to spend whatever time is left from one ministry in yet another one; but in a quiet life with enough time to spend in prayer and spiritual reading.<sup>11</sup>

As idiosyncratic as he can sound, we can trace Alvarez de Paz' growing maturity in his later works. His experiences in Peru made the former novice who wanted to join the Carthusians aware of how contemplation leads to action. A passage where he describes the mystical state ends with the zeal of the missionaries:

<sup>9</sup> See Edean, "The Strange Style of Prayer".

<sup>10</sup> Aurelio Yanguas, 'Alvarez de Paz et l'oraison affective', *Revue d'Ascétique et Mystique*, 19 (1938), 376-393.

<sup>11</sup> Antonio Astrain, *Historia de la Compañia de Jesus en la Asistencia de España*, volume 4, part 2 (Madrid: Real Casa, 1909), 546.



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*San Pedro Cathedral, Lima*

In it the soul is so full of sweetness and delight that it seems that only with difficulty it is held so that it does not burst open the body .... The lower part of the soul remains enchanted and brimming with tenderness. Everything dissipates in gentle tears. An urgent desire for the things in heaven arises .... The soul is strengthened so that it can face adversity and obstacles .... Zeal and desire for the salvation of souls are increased ....<sup>12</sup>

Here we have three important elements that we will also find in Montoya's mystical theology. First, we have an intense desire for heavenly things. Then we see that there is no fear of adversity—something that Jesuits in frontier, colonial territory encountered every day. Finally we see that the intense desire is linked to the desire for the salvation of souls. Passages like this are rare in Alvarez de Paz' mystical

<sup>12</sup> Diego Alvarez de Paz, *Opera Iacobi Alvarez de Paz*, volume 6, 566 a-b; V, III, V. Quoted in Azpitarte, *La Oración contemplativa*, 97.

theology. Yet the few we find are precious. His exhortation to be like guardian angels, whose vocation is directed towards both God and those in their care, is one of these:

... we should imitate our Guardian Angel, who perfectly serves God by caring for our spiritual health, but at the same time maintains his peace with his gaze always fixed in the divine face. Fervour for divine ministry does not obscure its light, nor does the vision of God present an obstacle in taking care of us ... Likewise, while we are in external action, we should glance at God so that during moments of holy rest we empty ourselves ... into pure contemplation.<sup>13</sup>

Montoya, as we shall see, took up this call and became for many a guardian angel.

#### **Antonio Ruiz de Montoya**

As a young man in colonial Lima, Montoya felt attraction both to the life of a soldier and to the religious life. In his twentieth year he spent eight days exploring his vocation while making the Spiritual Exercises under the guidance of one of the Spanish Jesuits assigned to the colonial territories. During the Exercises he entered into the kind of prayer that is often called mystical. He tells us of his experience:

If a man who is in a room surrounded by windows wishes to recollect himself in the dark, he would slowly close all windows. The more windows he closes the more his senses are recollected until everything is obscured, without his being able to see, hear or touch anything. A similar thing happened to my soul. Slowly my senses began to fall asleep. I was not able to see, hear or smell anything, even though my faculties remained lively.<sup>14</sup>

These signs of apophatic darkness place Montoya in the company of Gregory of Nyssa and John of the Cross, for whom God is met in absolute withdrawal from exterior reality. Reducing sensory input intensifies the mind's concentration so as to focus only on God. Such intensification occurs not only at the cognitive level but also at the

<sup>13</sup> Diego Alvarez de Paz, *De vita spirituali*, volume 2, 36. Quoted in Francisco de Castillo, *Un místico del siglo XVI*, edited by Ruben Vargas Ugarte (Lima: GIL, 1960), vii.

<sup>14</sup> José Luis Rouillon Arróspide, *Antonio Ruiz de Montoya: biografía* (Lima: UNISINOS, 2001), 23.

emotional level, where desire is increased. For Montoya this led into a rapturous encounter with Christ:

It seemed that Christ Our Lord came to me and drew my mouth to his side, which was bleeding. The consolation I felt cannot be expressed in words. This I felt mostly with my senses. He disappeared. I was left so consoled and moved that everything seemed meaningless. I felt so strong a desire to pray that I could not think of anything else.<sup>15</sup>

But the sensuousness and physicality of this encounter brought Montoya back to the exterior world and to what needed to be done in it. Mystical ecstasy was not an end in itself but the place where his mission would be revealed. Christ showed him in a vision how the indigenous people,

... were being chased by men bearing weapons in their hands. When the latter caught up with them, they bludgeoned them, wounded them, and ravaged them, seizing and kidnapping great numbers and setting them to hard labour. At the same time he beheld a group of men who shone brighter than the sun, robed in white garments. He could tell that these belonged to the Society of Jesus—not by the colour but by a certain understanding that enlightened his mind .... These men were striving with all their might to drive off the others, who had the appearance of devils .... This sight enkindled in him a burning desire to be their fellow in this noble task.<sup>16</sup>

Montoya decided to enter the Jesuits so as to help the indigenous people. But his call to ministry cannot be separated from his call to a life of prayer. In these two excerpts we find how he associates desire with the two calls: He experiences both a 'strong desire to pray' and a 'burning desire to be their fellow in this noble task'.

After his formation Montoya was assigned to minister to the indigenous population. He found out that the vision he had had during his prayer was not far from the truth. Forced labour was decimating the people. In a document from the mission at San Ignacio we find a letter from

<sup>15</sup> Arróspide, *Montoya*, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, *Spiritual Conquest*, translated by C. J. McNaspy (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1993), 36.



Spanish Cruelty to Indian Slaves, by *Theodore de Bry*

the indigenous leaders to the king asking for his intervention. The letter reads:

Our people have been consumed. Not only our people but also the sons of the leaders and even the leaders themselves end up dying in the jungle without the sacraments, as if they were infidels or irrational animals. The plantations are full of the bones of our people and our sons .... Now only our women remain. They do not cease weeping for the death of their sons and husbands.<sup>17</sup>

Montoya himself writes in one of his letters to his superiors:

They kill the Indians as if they were animals, regardless of age or sex. They kill the children so that their mothers will walk faster. Because the elderly cannot walk as fast and cannot work they kill

<sup>17</sup> Arróspide, *Reducciones*, 221.



them by hitting them on the head. Leaders and rebels are also killed so that they do not incite the others.<sup>18</sup>

The plight of the indigenous people moved Montoya to become embroiled in international disputes over whether or not they were human beings. He travelled to Spain to argue on their behalf, and convinced the king to support the Jesuits' cause. He saw his actions as part of a spiritual enterprise, not a political one. The book he wrote in order to gain support for his mission, *Spiritual Conquest*, describes supernatural graces received as signs of God's approval for the Jesuits' work. The book became popular and won many to the Jesuits' side.<sup>19</sup> The king granted the native people the right to possess arms and defend themselves against the colonists' incursions.

His mystical practice did not diminish while he was engaged in these activities but intensified. While praying before a return trip to Lima,

... he suddenly felt that his soul, as at previous times, retreated and recollected itself to his inner part. He noticed that a ray of light emerged from the tabernacle and arrived at his chest, wounding him. By this his heart received much consolation and assurance of the graces he would receive in such a long and dangerous trip.<sup>20</sup>

It was prayer that strengthened Montoya throughout his ministry.

But as a Jesuit called to contemplation in action, Montoya also knew how difficult contemplation could be. During his time Jesuits often emphasized *meditation*, as taught at the beginning of St Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, more than *contemplation*, described at the end. Meditation is praying with the imagination, applying the senses and engaging in conversation with God. Montoya teaches that:

Contemplation is a sincere gazing at God, lacking discourse, which produces in the understanding the highest concept of God and in the will an ardent desire of loving him. Contemplation ought not to

<sup>18</sup> Arróspide, *Reducciones*, 234.

<sup>19</sup> Astrain, *Historia de la Compañía de Jesús*, volume 5, 565.

<sup>20</sup> Arróspide, *Reducciones*, 305.

have as its object something sensible, but to be totally spiritual. This is the difference between contemplation and meditation.<sup>21</sup>

Montoya had learnt from experience that emptying the mind of thoughts and images requires effort. Castillo had practised meditation as the Jesuits taught, but felt called to engage also in contemplation, even when it was a struggle. Montoya borrowed an example from St Teresa to describe this struggle:

Saint Teresa complained about that little butterfly that fluttered around her understanding like around a candle's flame. It impeded her from knowing God and finding the will to love him.<sup>22</sup>

The understanding is restless. What it needs to do is to surrender to the light of God, a brightness that blinds and leaves one in darkness. A way of doing this is described by St Ignatius who, at the end of the *Spiritual Exercises*, teaches us to focus on the rhythm of the breath or a word from a prayer that gives one consolation.

Montoya liked to pray with the word *renuncio*, 'I renounce', as a way of leaving everything to God. He renounces his memory, understanding and will, just as Ignatius did when he prayed the *Suscipe*: 'Take, O Lord, and receive my memory, my will and understanding ...' (Exx 234). By doing this Montoya moved from discursive activity to non-discursive rest. First, he saw himself renouncing wealth, fame and power in order to leave space for God, until at the end only the word *renuncio* was left, leading to a wordless prayer. In this prayer what remained was a 'simple gaze, staring at the beloved, saying nothing, expressing nothing. With this simple gazing and intimate silence more is said than by speaking.'<sup>23</sup> Montoya would then leave this silence with enough strength to keep renouncing in his life those things that impeded him in his ministry to the native people. In the midst of adversity he would return to prayer, oscillating between exteriority and interiority. An accident while travelling through the jungle provided an opportunity for supernatural intervention through prayer:

***In the midst of  
adversity he  
would return to  
prayer***

<sup>21</sup> Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, *Sílex del Divino Amor* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1991), 145.

<sup>23</sup> Montoya, *Sílex*, 259.

My knee was swollen, my muscles like iron. At every moment I felt as if I were being stabbed with spears. I lacked even a bandage to wrap my leg with. Deciding that my best medicine would be prayer, I commended myself to my glorious father St Ignatius .... Hardly had I dozed off for a few moments through exhaustion, when I felt St Ignatius at my feet. He touched my foot and said: 'Go on with your journey; your foot is healed'. I immediately woke up (I am not sure if I was asleep) and tested my leg: it was healed.<sup>24</sup>

Prayer also allowed Montoya to find God no matter what job he had to do. As he tells us:

I do not live in any place, but in Him who does not take any space yet permeates everything with His immensity: since I seek Him I shall find Him, whether in the king's palace or the school's kitchen at Santa Fe.<sup>25</sup>

Whatever the ministry he was involved with, the mystical side of his life was what motivated him to keep struggling in his fight for justice. This was a lesson that his brother Francisco del Castillo would learn by heart.

### ***Francisco del Castillo***

Castillo brought together mystical contemplation and the activity of ministry as successfully as his teacher Montoya did.<sup>26</sup> Castillo was born in Lima in 1615 and entered the Jesuit novitiate seventeen years later. He studied to become a missionary under the guidance of Montoya. Yet his calling would turn out to be different after a discernment made during prayer:

One day after Communion, giving thanks to God, I asked His Majesty to let me know in which ministry I would please and serve Him the most. An inner voice seemed to be saying: in the ministry to black slaves.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Montoya, *Spiritual Conquest*, 35.

<sup>25</sup> Arróspide, *Reducciones*, 325.

<sup>26</sup> My two references for this section are Castillo's autobiography, edited by Ugarte as *Un místico*, and the biography by Armando Nieto Vélez, *Francisco del Castillo: el apóstol de Lima* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Perú, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> Castillo, *Un místico*, 14.

By this time slaves brought from Africa were replacing indigenous slaves, who were succumbing to disease brought on by the inhuman conditions in which they were kept. Castillo was among the first to include these African slaves in the Jesuits' ministries. As one witness stated during Castillo's beatification process, he 'always attended with special care the sick, the abandoned and the poorest of the poor, mainly black slaves and prisoners'.<sup>28</sup>



Slaves praying the rosary, by Guaman Poma

Prayer inspired all of Castillo's actions. His major project was building a chapel dedicated to 'Our Lady of the Abandoned', whose design he had seen in a vision.<sup>29</sup> After a colloquy with the Virgin Mary he began construction of the edifice, which would include a school for the education of the poorest children. The chapel became a centre for his ministry. In his sermons, Castillo encouraged others to help the needy. He organized groups to visit hospitals and bring food to the sick. Days were set apart to visit prisoners and slaves.

The mystical graces that he received were not something that alienated him from everyday life. They were a sign that what he was accomplishing was the will of God. His encounters with Christ served as reinforcement of his actions. Even the most otherworldly, rapturous moments were a source of energy that would help him continue his work:

<sup>28</sup> Vélez, *Francisco del Castillo*, 147.

<sup>29</sup> Vélez, *Francisco del Castillo*, 119. Castillo, *Un místico*, 176.

... waking up at midnight, I saw and felt, in an intellectual vision, Christ Our Redeemer crucified next to my bed. I felt at the same time in my heart and my will the effects of his presence: great ardour and exultation in my heart, celestial joy and consolation, an anxious and passionate surge and inner impulse to join my soul with Christ Our Lord. My soul knew and sensed a powerful and superior attraction towards his Majesty. His loving violence carried and dragged the soul unifying it with himself like metal to a magnet .... My soul saw itself in his arms, my body and soul being penetrated by the crucified Christ ....<sup>30</sup>

The crucified Christ carried him away in ecstasy for a specific reason. Christ, 'very poor and wounded', told him that 'since in the poor you offer me refuge, I shall offer refuge to you too'.<sup>31</sup> Castillo's identification of Christ with the outcast was strengthened by his mystical encounters. The intense desire he felt for God was to be directed towards the service of others. He tells us that this union is the way in which Christ is able to work through him:



Crucifix from the St Miguel Arcanjo Church, São Miguel das Missões, Brazil

<sup>30</sup> Castillo, *Un místico*, 41.

<sup>31</sup> Castillo, *Un místico*, 140.

I felt that my soul became one with Christ and Christ one with my soul .... Christ was seeing, hearing, speaking and acting through my eyes, ears, mouth, hands and body.<sup>32</sup>

From this we can deduce that for Castillo the mystical moment did not end when the visions and strong feelings were over. It continued as he visited the prisoner, listened to the sick, preached to the comfortable, and served the poor with his hands and body.

Castillo would give simple everyday moments a mystical significance. Extraordinary visions, such as the one below, were just a reflection of what he did in his day to day job.

That afternoon I was given some sweets in a handkerchief. I always refused to accept gifts but in this case, since the woman who gave them to me was very devout, I accepted. I in turn offered the gift to God by giving it away to charity. That night, while sleeping, I received a greater gift. The Lord returned the gift ... by becoming one with me, not only in my soul but also in my body. It was a very special gift of consolation, with wonderful effects of fusion, humility, light and a reciprocal love with God.<sup>33</sup>

Here the mystical moment is not in the ecstasy of the night. That consolation is but the reverberation of the everyday episode, which is an example of what has been called 'Ignatian mysticism of joy in the world'. For Karl Rahner,

... every act which is good in itself, therefore also one which is already meaningful within the world, can be supernaturally elevated by grace in such a way that its aim and its meaning extend beyond the significance it has within the world.<sup>34</sup>

Castillo's mystical graces helped him realise that such gifts flow back and forth between the humdrum of daily life and the contemplative space in which the day's events are perceived anew in the context of divine providence. Little events give rise to mystical joy, which for Castillo is then elevated into an extraordinary state, but only as a sign of the everyday grace that is always present. The

<sup>32</sup> Castillo, *Un místico*, 42.

<sup>33</sup> Castillo, *Un místico*, 122.

<sup>34</sup> Karl Rahner 'Ignatian Mysticism of Joy in the World', in *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning*, edited by Geoffrey B. Kelly (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 91.

contemplative space in which this happens is not absolutely detached. Its boundaries are permeable; mystical grace diffuses between interior and exterior.

Castillo and Montoya provide us with an example of how the Jesuit charism of contemplation in action does not have to lead to tension. Mysticism and ministry can reinforce each other. The Jesuit experiment in colonial Paraguay, linking contemplation and action, had effects that still reverberate in Latin America. Many today continue exploring the frontier that was first encountered by Montoya and Castillo. This frontier is not a matter of geographical limits but of the barriers that often separate us from God and from others—barriers that these Jesuits were able to transcend.

*Juan Miguel Marin* is a DTh. candidate at Harvard Divinity School, specialising in the history of Christianity. Originally from Puerto Rico, he attended Tufts University and later Harvard, from which he received his MTS and MDiv. degrees. He is currently writing a dissertation entitled 'Firestone of Divine Love: Erotic Desire in Hispanic Jesuit Mysticism'. His two most recent articles, on medieval laywomen's spirituality and on the comparative study of religion, will be published in *Harvard Theological Review* and the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*.