Relocating the Recorded Religious and Mystical Experiences of Non-elite Women in Atlantic and Hemispheric Contexts (Attending to Early Modern Women: Remapping Routes and Spaces (June 21-23, 2012))

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For this workshop, we have put together a group of readings representing the voices and experiences of non-elite women associated with what we might call religious virtuosity, including exemplary piety, ecstatic and mystical experiences, and remarkable conversions. The texts here include portions of the *vida* of Juana Esperanza de San Alberto, an African woman who professed as a nun in Puebla despite rules forbidding the profession of non-Europeans; a letter treating the remarkable sanctity of Catherine Tekakwitha, a recently sainted Mohawk Catholic; Ursula de Jesus, an Afro-Peruvian *donada* whose mystical experiences were recorded in a diary; Anna Maria Schuchart, a Pietist servant girl in Saxony, whose ecstatic religious experiences were likewise recorded by others in the early 1690s; a letter by Sarah Simon, a Narragansett women enrolled in his school, to Eleazar Wheelock; and selections from the publicly distributed criminal conversion narratives of Katherine Garrett and Patience Boston, Pequot servants in colonial New England. These texts have in common not only the non-elite status and religious expression of their subjects but their status as ventriloquized or collaborative texts, recorded or mediated by ministers, doctors, and other amenuenses. Often issues of truth and identity shaped by uneven power relationships guide strategies for reading these texts; in this workshop we ask whether approaching these texts comparatively and with attention to space and movement may provide useful insights into both these texts and, more broadly, our understanding of Atlantic and hemispheric contexts.

Communities, exchanges, environments, and pedagogies are all important elements of the religious communities in which these texts were produced and on which they commented. All of these texts were produced within religious communities and describe or reflect differences within those communities as well as multivalent agendas related to how the communities are delimited and what activities they pursue in the wider world. Accordingly, these texts both addressed and facilitated a number of cultural exchanges. In some cases the intended audiences are transatlantic; in others, apostolic and colonial activities shape both the perceptions of the text’s central figure and the interests of the editors or amenuenses. In attending to non-elite women’s negotiation of space as represented in these texts, we are also interested in a number of environmental concerns, including what these texts tell us about domestic, institutional, and urban spaces as having contested meanings. Finally, all these texts have pedagogical aims, but we also invite seminar participants to reflect on contemporary interdisciplinary collaborations, manifested in team teaching and collaborative research.
Discussion topics and questions:

We will introduce a set of key questions, methodological challenges, and current debates related to the following four areas, with particular reference to a couple specific passages in these texts that may be used to spark discussion:

- Territorial agency—focusing, for instance, on competing notions of mastering space
- Contested representations of race and class
- Comparative approaches to highly mediated or ventriloquized texts
- Transatlantic networks, communities, and activities that have some association with these texts, either directly or indirectly

Questions related to these areas we will consider include:

- How do non-elite women occupy specific physical, social, institutional, cultural, and discursive spaces in expected and unexpected ways? Do they rework specific spaces, and, if so, how? What enables or prevents this reworking?
- How does the mediated nature of the text’s production impact understandings of territorial agency? How can our (post)modern interpretive strategies open up (or leave undisclosed) the early modern woman subject?
- What can we learn by putting these texts in conversations? What are the limitations and risks of this kind of comparative work?
- Often the texts of non-elites, especially when highly mediated, are understood in terms of confinement and constraint. How does a comparative approach to these texts and attention to transatlantic networks and other social, cultural, and political contexts allow us to understand these texts apart from the framework of confinement?

Primary readings include selections from each of the following:


Translated selections from the vida of Juana Esperanza de San Alberto, from José Gómez de la Parra, Fundacio, y primero siglo, del muy religioso convento de sr. s. Joseph de religiosas carmelitas descalzas de la ciudad de Puebla de los Angeles, en la Nueva España (1763).

A Faithful Narrative of the Wicked Life and Remarkable Conversion of Patience Boston alias Samson; Who was Executed at York, in the County of York, July 24th 1735, for the Murder of BENJAMIN TROT of Falmouth in Casco Bay, a Child of about Eight Years of age, whom she Drowned in a Well. With a PREFACE by the Reverend Messr. SAMUEL & JOSEPH MOODY, Pastors of the Church in said Town. Boston: Kneeland and Green, 1783.

Selection from the Letter of Father Cholenec regarding Catherine Tekakwitha in *Lettres Édifiantes et Curieuses, Écrits des Missions Étrangères*. Lyon, 1819.


**Recommended readings:**


Harvey, Tamara. “‘Taken from her Mouth’: Narrative Authority and the Conversion of Patience Boston,” *Narrative* 6.3 (1998): 256-270.
Schorb, Jodi. “Seeing Other Wise: Reading a Pequot Execution Narrative.” In Bross and Wyss, 148-161.
---. “Writing Back to Wheelock: One Young Woman’s Response to Colonial Christianity.” In Bross and Wyss, 96-104.
(8r) In the name of the Holy Trinity, I do not know if this is something that comes from that trickster. Since the New Year, which was last Friday, and until now, vespers of the Epiphany, each time I go to pray, a Franciscan friar appears to me. I never knew him, but he is the one who threw himself off the wall. God only knows if it is true. The friar appears and asks that I commend his spirit to God. He is suffering terribly, and on his behalf he wants me to offer to the eternal Father the terrible torments that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered those three hours that He hung from the cross, until He died. I asked myself, “Did God experience so much agony?” He replied that as a man He experienced terrible agony, but did not need to, He only did it for our salvation. When He commended Himself into the hands of the Father, He also did it to teach us and serve as an example. He did not need to do this, because He is God. Among other things, he said that many friars and nuns of their orders behaved like statues: with only their bodies participating in their religious practice. If they observed the Divine Office it was without regard, devotion, or mindfulness, and during mass, they were distracted and unprepared. I do not know how to say what happened then. Finally, the friar said that because of these misdeeds they suffered terribly. From the moment he fell, which he had done without evil intent, he had performed many acts of contrition, and he now suffered the very same torment that exists in hell. He showed me a small wall the height of my chest and said that only that wall stood between him and hell. In spite of the wall, the flames there tormented him. I said to God, that if this came from Him, I would do everything, everything possible for the friar, including all the stations of the cross and earning all the indulgences possible. Today, on the vespers of the Epiphany, the friar returned to thank me and tell me that God would reward me and would give me the respite I had given him. I asked if God had received that little bit, and he said, yes, that God took heed of what was done for the living and the dead. I should continue to commend his spirit and earn indulgences for him because he still suffered from head to toe: especially around the crown of his head, where he experienced particular torment because he did not wear the tonsure ordered by our father, Saint Francis. I only remember all this in bits and pieces. But I do remember that he said that the time it takes to say the creed is equivalent to years of suffering in purgatory. Because I am not sure these things are real, I do not speak of them as soon as they happen to me. But for ten days that friar persisted, pursuing me each time I entered a state of recollection. I have always seen him standing, his hands folded and covered in flames from head to foot. Because he continually insisted, I said to him, “Who am I, what worth do I
PART II

Translation of Ursula’s Diary

have to do such a thing?” He answered that God could place His special gifts in anyone. Many kings and monarchs, emperors and powerful leaders were in hell: priests and nuns as well. He would be there too, were it not for the great mercy of God, and other things along those lines that I have forgotten.

On the day of the Epiphany, I was in a state of recollection after having taken communion. I do not know whether these are tricks of the big-footed one, or from my head, but I recalled María Bran, a slave of the convent who had died suddenly some fourteen years ago; one of the things most forgotten for me in this world. At the same time, I saw her in a priest’s alb, the whitest of whites, beautifully embellished and gathered together with a short cord with elegant tassels. She also wore a crown of flowers on her head. The celestial beings arranged for me to see her from the back, although I could still see her face and she was quite lovely, and her face a resplendent black. I said, “How is it that such a good black woman, who had been neither a thief nor liar, had spent so much time in purgatory?” She said she had gone there because of her character, and because she slept and ate at the improper time. Although she had been there a long time, her punishment had been mild. She was very thankful to God, who, with His divine providence had taken her from her land and brought her down such difficult and rugged roads in order to become a Christian and be saved. I asked whether black women went to heaven and she said if they were thankful and heeded His beneficence, and thanked Him for it. They were saved because of His great mercy. When I ask these questions I do not do so because I want to but, just as I soon as I see them, they speak to me without my wishing it to happen, and they make me speak without wanting to. I need for them to commend me to God because all this torments me. She also told me that I should thank God for the gifts He had given her, and although I thought she went to heaven, I could not be certain.

I am burdened by a terrible temptation. When I run into the nuns, I want to bury myself so that they do not see me. On my way to the choir, I encountered a circle of nuns standing there, and so-and-so among them. As I passed by, she said, “Is there anyone in this house who performs miracles?” I felt like dropping dead on the spot. Distraught, I went to God, as He knows. “Why did you allow this to happen, my Lord—what is it in me that they say such things?” I was so bereft that my heart would not stop pounding in my chest. Pay no attention to this, leave it to me. They called me a trickster and imposter, and they did not believe me, even when I was afflicted. And there, at the end when I was dying, they said it again. What you now ask is more difficult than if two hundred men wished to move a mountain from one place to another by their own might, without it being my will. Later, I had the opportunity to climb up to a lofty cell and from there I saw a mountain. What the voices had said to me, here inside myself, now happened. Even if they were one thousand, or even more. I looked again at the other side, and there I saw the San Cristóbal Mountain. Within myself, the voices explained that even if they were many, without the will of God, they could do nothing. I forgot to mention that Christ told me not to fear this deceiver; he had no more power than that which they wished to give him.

Thursday, one day after the Epiphany, while with the Lord, there was an earthquake. I was so frightened, I did not know what to do with myself, and while running from there, I forgot about God. I returned later and then did what the Lord taught me to do. I made an offering to God, in the name of what His Divine Majesty did for us, and, in particular, on behalf of those of us in this house living in mortal sin. I asked Him to forgive me for having left Him without even remembering my sins. The voices explained that asking for forgiveness takes time, because when trouble comes, nothing can be done. They told me it happened so that I would praise God. I thanked God that we had not perished during that earthquake. They explained that the blood of Christ clamed to His eternal Father on behalf of the offenses committed against Him. Had I not seen when they insulted the one Son, to such a degree that His Father wished to vindicate that offense, and to such a degree that the Father wished to end everything until the Son returned to placate His Father? They commit many sins of all kinds: some covetously; others without the slightest shame or fear. And they offend Him even more in religious houses, where they should only love and serve Him. Hell is full of those who live their life in an uproar and in diversions. The sinners say, “What is this all about? God is good.” They refuse to pay any mind, nor do they ask forgiveness for their sins. They do not even remember that there is a God who should be feared. How many tears did our Lord Jesus Christ shed in Jerusalem for those sins? How much did He suffer in order to save us? His blessed mother wept her entire life from the moment her Son became flesh. Although during that one moment she experienced joy, the rest was bitterness and tears. I do not know how to put into words what happened there, nor do I understand what it was like then, although at the time it was presented to me I understood it very well. God knows, (9r) and I tell Him that He knows I only seek to please Him.

The following Friday, some nuns took communion and among them, one arrived, and they said if they were to take away all those things it would be better. More about all that.

In the choir I saw a lot of smoke billowing and asked what it was. The voices explained that mortal sins caused that.

Sunday, on the last day of Epiphany, I felt terrible anguish. Wishing to enter a state of recollection, I had forgotten that hell exists, but then I saw a depth so foul-smelling, and even deeper than many wells. It seemed to me that its depth is comparable to the distance from here to heaven. There I saw a great multitude of people who resembled ants, and they said, “Oh poor me, here forever.” I said, “Jesus be with me. There are many people here.” The voices told me, Every day, as many as you see there fall in. As you can see, they come from all parts of the world: infidels, Moors and Jews, and of many nations. Of the Christians, few were saved because of their carelessness; nor were the ungrateful ones, who were inclined to follow their vices. The voices said that the blood of God would remedy things. I said, “I believe in God the almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ.” They said, Those poor, unfortunate ones who do not believe in Jesus Christ. The flames rose up above their heads, and above them, there was something like a mesh, where the flames reached through. They said, What is above the netting is purgatory and although the punishments there were also terrible, they were nothing compared to the affliction of not being able to see God. It also seemed to me that I saw some nuns there. I felt such terrible distress about this and asked God to free me from such visions. The
voices responded that it was very beneficial to learn about hell. I do not know how to explain, nor do I understand what happened there. May God be with me and give me His light, and may He keep me in His hand. The voices also said that God had His hands lowered and that when He raised them it was to punish and cast them out, and that He was as just as He was merciful.

Monday, as soon as I had gone to the choir and prostrated myself before the Lord, I saw two black women below the earth. In an instant, they were beside me. One of them said to me, “I am Lusia, the one who served Ana de San Joseph, and I have been in purgatory for this long, only because the great merciful God showed compassion toward me.” No one remembers me.” Very slowly, she spoke of God’s goodness, power, and mercy, and how we should love and serve Him. Lusia had served this community in good faith, but sometimes they had accused her of certain things, and at times she suffered her penance where she tended to cook. For the love of God, would Ursula please commend her spirit to God. Before Lusia died, she had endured awful hardships, and because of them she had discounted much of the punishment. This is all mixed up, as I remember it. She spoke at length, and her appearance corresponded to the way she looked while living. I did not know who the other dead black woman was. On another day, in the morning, Lusia returned with the same demand and requested the same for doña Polonia de Moya. She said doña Polonia had endured terrible suffering and had no one who would remember her, and I thought I saw her there. I said to God that if He sent the suffering, I would commend them to Him and offer whatever I could for them and for that friar, who almost always appears before me. On one of these days, the friar told me that what a community (9v) did together for a soul was great and worth more than when it was done for many souls, because then, only a little went for each one. I see that the flames do not come out of the top of her head as they did before, now they only reach to the middle of her forehead. I do not know whether this is the chicanery of that trickster.

Another time, the morena [black woman] Lusia returned with the nun, doña Polonia, saying that I should ask the Father in the name of the Incarnation of his Son on their behalf: I said, “In the name of the Incarnation?” and the Angolan woman said, “Yes, in the name of the Incarnation.” She explained, “Had He not become flesh, been born, suffered, and died for our redemption?” I saw the nun with that peculiar eye that looked as though it would burst.

Thursday, at times I would like to know how the nun, doña Mariana Machuca, is. While having this temptation, I asked my Lord Jesus to guide me so that I would no longer have it and would do only what He wished. Today, while I was where I usually am, a desire swept over me. I resisted it as much as possible, because I do not know whether these are contrivances of that one [the devil]. I saw her in purgatory, in the same way as she was here: seated on her chair with her cane held close to her. I wondered, “In purgatory? How can such a saintly person be there?” The voices said that she was there, purging herself, and that it is worthwhile for the living to mortify themselves in many ways, although they live as though they had not done that. They see and hear as though they cannot hear or see, and in this manner, many things are not the way they really are. The voices said, that in order not to sin they avoided certain things, so as not to be punished when they deserved it, or they let obligatory matters slide. All these were the devil’s tricks. No matter what, one should never stop fulfilling one’s duties. God’s creatures will not be left without receiving the proper discipline, because that might be the cause of their perdition. They are redeemed with the blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ. I do not know how to describe what happened there. The punishment doña Mariana experienced was minimal, and that children also pass through the fire, and that on the day of the Incarnation she will go to heaven. This is written the way I remember it, in bits and pieces. God only knows what it is; I pay no heed.

Friday, I have the nerve to say, “My Lord Jesus, and there, have they heeded this?” Because I said this, the voices repeated what they had said before, saying My good Jesus. I said, “I should say, ‘My Lord, Jesus Christ.’ They said it is important for a child to treat his parent with love and reverence. Later, near the end, I see her on her deathbed, with large candles, and all the other things they place on the dead. This must be a trick of that devil.

Later, in the evening, while in my bed and praying to God with my eyes closed, Cecilia appeared in front of me. I was so terribly frightened that I began shaking like someone poisoned by mercury. Wherever I turned she appeared before me, in the same way and dressed in the same manner as when she was alive. She was an Indian dona who had died some years ago.

Saturday afternoon, on the day of San Marcelo, I was praying the entire rosary, and the voices told me to meditate on when they took my Lord down from the cross and the intolerable pain and agony He suffered there. I should consider that the Lord had suffered all He had suffered from the moment He entered this world solely for our salvation and redemption, and He had done it all because of His eternal Father’s will. If His Father willed Him to be born, He said, “Thy will be done”; if He willed Him to suffer, “Thy will be done”; if He willed Him to die, “Thy will be done,” all in such a way that He followed the will of God in everything. I said I did not wish to see or hear anything. I want to get up now and leave here. My Lord Jesus was our teacher from whom we should learn obedience, humility, and all the other virtues. I should recognize that I am nothing, a worm, and deserved only hell. Only because of God’s goodness and love did I receive His beneficience. I should be extremely grateful for these gifts and worship my Lord with the same reverence and love with which the angels adored Him in the manger, on the cross, and in the tomb. I should also ponder how, because of God’s will, He had moved that tremendous slab away from the tomb. At that moment, within myself I had the desire to understand how they had carried my Lord to the sepulchre. They explained that it happened in the same way that I see them carry the most Holy Body in the procession on the Friday of Holy Week, and in the same manner that the venerable men, accompanied by angels, went along singing. I do not know how to describe what happened there. Afterward, I offered three decades of my rosary for each soul,” most of them clerics and friars outside the convent. In a chastising tone, the voices said, that with so many in the house for whom I could plead or offer prayers, why did I look for those outside, naming so-and-so, whom I had named in my prayers. While saying this, a throng of nuns came out from under the earth, and two by two they came by way of that deep place from the area near the kitchen. First, there was doña Teresa, looking very
garden He could easily have made Judas die, but pretended not to notice, just as He does with us now. He waits, one year, then another, then many, and still, we continue to offend Him. The three Divine Persons love us so much that they held a divine council to address the issue of our salvation. They are all the same being, with the same power, wisdom, goodness, and love. The Father gave us His Son, as did the Holy Spirit, and the Son gave Himself for our salvation, but it came at such a terrible cost: spilling His blood and giving His life for those who are ungrateful. I said, "Jesus be with me, who comes to me with such things? I believe in the Holy Trinity, and everything the Holy Roman Church (11v) says. I do not come here so that they can disturb me, but to praise my Lord Jesus, whom the Virgin bore and who died on the cross." The voices said, "Why are you so afraid of that big-footed one?" I replied, "Because He loves to deceive." They said that God is greater than millions of them, and if they have power to deceive or tempt, it is because God allows it, and to thank God. We should go to Him in faith and confidence. In the midst of all these things, such thoughts come to me in waves.

Thursday, I do not know why they come to me with such stories. The voices tell me that my Lord Jesus brought His apostles to the Last Supper, washed their feet with such loving compassion, and did not refuse to do the same with Judas, though He knew what He had plotted. Washing their feet and drying them with that towel symbolized confession, and that when He gave them communion, He did the same with Judas in order not to scandalize the others. If we found out we were being betrayed, we would say, "I am enraged, I cannot stand the sight of him." When they apprehended Him and Judas arrived to give Him a kiss of peace, He could have killed him then and there, but He pretended not to know, just as He does now with us. He always waits for us, and here we always offend Him. I am in such a quandary with so many things coming all at once. I have no head or memory for such things. One other thing: we owe the Lord so much. He did so much for us, and still we turn our backs on Him. Instead, we serve the one who beats us with an iron rod.

In the afternoon, while praying a while, I remembered that a nun had urgently requested me to commend her friend's spirit to God. The friend was seriously ill, and the nun did not wish to see her die. I told the Lord the same thing the nun had told me, though it was not my intention to say anything on this occasion because I never wish to speak or ask while I am praying. Finally, I explained to the Lord, repeating the words she had spoken, that she, who was His creature, had implored me to ask after that sick one. The voices responded by saying, "Who helped Him when He was on the cross? His Father abandoned Him in the moment of His Passion. He asked, "What matters most to the sick woman? If He wanted to free her from impediments and make her a saint, why not say, "Thy will be done?" A while later, I saw an old priest coming toward me. I cannot recall ever having seen him before in my life, but as he came toward me he said, "I am Joseph Niño. I was the sexton of this monastery for a while." I asked what he wanted and he responded, "The Lord of heaven and earth sent me to you." Because I hesitated, he said, "I ask that you commend my spirit in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth." I said to the Lord that if Niño came from Him, I would do what I could for him. He was wearing a surplice and said that when he was sexton, certain things occurred while he was in the church, and that he went to purgatory mainly because he was a hypocrite when he was there.

On Friday I went to the confessional to hide from the nuns. There was a cross inside the confessional, and when I saw it I said, "Jesus be with me, I do not wish to be here in order to see so-and-so in heaven. I have to go." I turned my thoughts toward heaven, and there in the distance I saw a very large Christ with great streams of blood pouring from His wounds. The voices told me, "That sea never runs dry. When (12x) a drop falls onto the heart of a sinner, he has the wind to his back until he safely reaches His Lord. I covered my ears, but it did not matter because they are not the ears that hear such things.

This morning I was cleaning out the drainage ditch of the infirmary from beginning to end, and from time to time I got spattered and soiled. The nuns there were saying to me, "You get so dirty, and yet you keep doing it. Why do you do this?" I said, "Why do you stick your nose in somebody else's business? If I dirty myself, I am the worse for it," and many other things. They just wear me out, so I leave them. In the afternoon, I went to the choir and the voices began saying to me, [deteriorated (det)] Did I realize the solace I would find in the end because of these things done for God?, mentioning what had occurred that morning. At that time, the voice said, You did such dangerous and extremely difficult tasks, all for God. It will be seen how good it is for us, and how grateful He is. He rewards everything, whatever it may be. Let us say, that if a king or any man gave him a present of one million, he would always be thankful to this man, and each year he would grant him a favor and [det]... he would owe him whatever he asked for. This is how God treats his servants.

Another evening, I went to the choir. I was so tired I could not help but fall asleep. I said to my Lord, "I am going to go now because I cannot go on." It must have been divine providence, because I chanced on a very sick woman who called me and asked me to light a candle and the charcoal and do a few other things and to summon a nun to help cure her, which is something the sister usually did. The nun responded to me very disagreeably, saying she was too tired, that the sick woman was too much trouble, and that she had already fulfilled her duties. I returned to the sick woman saying I had already called the sister. She took so long in coming that the sick woman asked me to summon her again, but once again the nun told me she did not wish to go. I told the sick woman that she was not going to come and that she should order me to do what I could. For better or worse, I would take care of her needs as best I could. When it was very late, and the night nearly over, the sister said, "I have been unable to sleep all night out of guilt because I did not help the sick woman." I went to the choir, and I don't know who it was who started speaking about how she was enjoying Christ's glory and how He left it for us and He came and suffered terribly throughout His life to redeem us and set a good example. For all that, we never failed to forget His kindness, and that He raised and redeemed us with such great effort. In this way she referred to the favors He had done and continued to do. Afterward, the voices told me to say, "I thank you, my Lord, because you made me a Christian. I thank you a thousand times over for bringing me to your house, one hundred million times for the blessed sacraments you sent for our benefit, one
hundred million times because you wanted us to receive them today.” In this way they referred to the many favors and how we should give thanks for them. They told me how often for each of them and how much evil they have saved me from, how much I deserved to be in hell, and how I should give thanks to God for this.

(12v) Another time, after I had taken communion the voices told me to commend the spirit of a black woman to God. She had been in the convent and had been taken out to be cured because she was gravely ill but died a few days later. This had happened more than thirty years ago, and I had forgotten about her as if she had never existed. I was frightened and thought to myself, “So long in purgatory?” The voices responded, For the things she did. Here, the voices led me to understand that she had illicitly loved a nun and the entire convent knew about it, but that my father, Saint Francis, and my mother, Saint Clare, had gotten down on their knees and prayed to Our Lady to secure the salvation of that soul from her Son. That is because she had served His house in good faith. Later, almost in front of me, I saw a crown of large thorns being lowered from heaven, suspended by a ribbon. I could not tell how many there were, maybe sixty or so. Within two days, I saw the morena again in that same corner, somewhat distant, like the first time I had seen her there. Then the voices told me that she did her penance in the old dormitory, and I now saw her in her human form, wearing a green skirt and a head scarf. The morena explained that she had got down on her behalf. I asked her, not because I wanted to, but because they made me. Within myself, I asked, “How, and why so much time in purgatory?” She told me that God loves His wives “so much that when He sees them fail to carry out their duties, He feels it deeply, just as husbands do when their wives are unfaithful. God, who raised and redeemed us, is so beneficent. So much happened there that is incomprehensible.

When we are fatigued, overworked, and exhausted, they say that my Lord Jesus Christ left paradise to struggle for our redemption and the solace we shall experience in the end. One day, he was saying this, he who speaks, and I do not know who he is. He was hovering over me for a moment. Then he said, Blessed Incarnation of the Son of God, or purest Virgin Mary, Mother of God, virgin before the birth, virgin during the birth, and virgin after the birth, daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, and wife of the Holy Spirit.” Later, he began to recount his favors, how we should give thanks to Him, how we should prepare ourselves to receive the sacrament, the purity and humility with which the Virgin carried Him within her, and imitating her, speaking to her within ourselves and giving Him thanks for so many gifts and other teachings. God only knows what happens there.

A nun’s mother was dying, and she asked the members of this community, and her friends in particular, to commend her mother’s spirit to God. She also asked them to find a confessor who could teach and help her. They asked me to do it. Later, another temptation came. Two nuns came, and each asked after a family member of theirs, who in the past month had experienced a misfortune and was now indisposed. I then felt great pity to see doña so-and-so in such a bad state because her mother, sija, and black female slave (13r) had died. So I went to God with all these things in mind, and the voices responded, What would become of us if we suffered no affliction? He suffered from the moment He came into this world and lived in exisito throughout His life, until He died on the cross with such terrible struggle, agony, and pain. Then they described the laces, thorns, and all the rest that had occurred during His life. He never forgot even the poorest of the poor, and it had cost Him all that. We were written in His wounds and that is so very forgotten. He sends us a test, and then another, and we still do not wish to understand that this is how He sends messages. Then He described the benefits and referred to the sacraments He established for our redemption—baptism, confirmation, all these—and that He had remained in the Most Holy Sacrament. We forget all this. Who can say what happened here? Then the voices asked me to tell the woman who was dying that she should remember when she had so many things to do that she neglected and abandoned her daughter. Because she wholeheartedly wanted God’s forgiveness for this offense, she should confess it.

On Palm Sunday, while preparing for communion, I said to the Lord that I would like to be the stool His Majesty stood upon in order to mount the mule that carried Him into Jerusalem. Later that same day, he responded, You should receive Him in a humble, obliging, and thankful manner: that is how Saint Teresa of Jesus did it...[det]...many fruitful things, but because I am so busy I cannot remember them all.

Later, I was in the choir in a state of recollection, and asked God to give me the grace to receive Him, I saw there in the ciborium, a large, crystalline window beyond compare. Behind it, I saw a spectacular, very white Nazarene dressed in a deep-red tunic with his hair falling to his shoulders and his arms open like the Savior. I began to call out to God that I could only believe in Him, and only for Him did I come to worship. I do not want to have visions or have the voices speak to me. After this happened I said to the Lord, “What do I need these visions for? What use are the visions to me?” The voices said that for those who love one another, the more they communicate, the more their love grows. By seeing what He did and how He suffered for us, we can be grateful and thankful and understand that sins are punished. I do not know how to explain what happened there. These are only bits and pieces. At that time, I heard about the curse of the fig tree. Just as He cursed the tree, He cursed rebellious, stubborn sinners. In spite of all the warnings sinners receive and the benefits He gives them, He continues to wait for them, year after year. The sinners say, “God is great and merciful,” and they do not wish to mend their ways. When He realizes that the sinners do not wish to change their behavior, He curses them. Who can say what happens here? He also said that just as souls are united with their bodies, so too are they united with the earth. Could I not see the agonies and travail experienced by those who were about to die? When bodies are uprooted from the earth, they suffer the same torment as when the soul is wrested from the body. They told me many, many things and explained them very well. It is just that I do not know how to say it so well. The book also came out. This was what I wanted to know...in the book...The book had to teach me what they were teaching me there.

Another day, just as I placed myself before God, they began speaking to me, which always happens. I said, “Jesus be with me, who is speaking to me?” They
should offer all this to His eternal Father, for that is what the souls had asked me.

Tuesday I adored my Lord Jesus Christ, while lying prostrate at His feet. I saw Him there from head to foot. I said, "How can I see all this when I am lying prostrate?" He said, Lying at my feet you can see everything through me, even hell. I do not know how it happened, but after He said this they shifted the image and carried me through some pitch-dark ravines, and placed me in a profound darkness. There I saw an enormous pillory and a great throng of condemned souls held by their throats, some face up, others face down. They explained that they were there because they had not aided the dying with every kindness. On the other side were innumerable souls, chained in gangs with iron chains.

I leave much unwritten because I can do no more. Fifty-seven folios were... (59r and 60r) [deteriorated]

Notes

1. "Each creed said was the equivalent to an instant, each moment, each step, each hour, each day," in other words, all the time (Diccionario de autoridades [henceforth DA], 2653).
2. The terms recogerse and recoger have a variety of meanings, but here Ursula refers to the act of spiritual contemplation or meditation. The term recollection is the closest English equivalent because it shares the Latin root. For a fuller explanation, see van Deussen, Between, 9.
3. 6 January.
4. This is a reference to Satan and is used throughout the text.
5. The alt is the vestment priests wore to say mass (DA, 1:161).
6. "So-and-so" is a translation of the term falsana, often used to avoid naming someone.
7. San Cristóbal Mountain is visible from the Convent of Santa Clara.
8. Viceroys Luis Enríquez de Guzman, the Count of Alba de Alstiste (1655-61) reported that in November 1655, Lima experienced a number of serious tremors (Hanke, Los Vírreynes españoles, IV, 5).
9. Generación can also mean "progeny" or the word "generation" as we know it.
10. Ana de San Joseph was elected interim vicaria (assistant abbess) in 1650, while the conventual election was pending. See "Auto Arzobispal," 1650, AAL, SC, 9:6. The word caridad can be translated as "love," "compassion," or "charity" (DA, 2:309).
11. Doña Apolonia de Moya appears in two documents related to a dispute over the sale of her cell. It is probably the same person (see "Autos que sigue Francisca de Álava... contra Apolonia de Moya," 1639-44, AAL, SC, 6:41; and "Autos que sigue Francisca de Álava," 1642-44, AAL, SC, 7:20).
12. Mariana de Michuca spent thirty years as a nun in Santa Clara and died on 8 September 1630 (Córdova y Salinas, Crónica, 96).

This is an excerpt from a chronicle describing the history of the first century of Puebla’s Discalced Carmelite convent. It was written by José Gómez de la Parra, a priest in Puebla. He began the chronicle with the convent’s foundation in 1604 and included individual vidas (spiritual biographies) of the forty-four nuns who died during the following century, including Juana Esperanza de San Alberto, a devout black slave who professed as a nun on her deathbed. People of African and indigenous descent were not usually allowed to take religious orders. The following excerpt comes from her biography.

Gómez de la Parra relied on the writings of another nun, Juana de Jesús María, for information about Esperanza’s life. This Spanish nun had known Esperanza for thirty-nine years, and in 1680, one year after Esperanza’s death, the bishop ordered her to write Esperanza’s story. Juana de Jesús María added information from other nuns to her own recollections to construct her biography of Esperanza.

Selection #1 pages 310-311

[310] Of this illustrious black woman a manuscript [cuaderno] was written, after her death, in [16]80,1 by Mother Juana de Jesús María, by order and mandate of Señor Santa Cruz, in which [Juana de Jesus Maria] gives an extended account of [Juana Esperanza de San Alberto’s] virtue, having known her 39 years, adding information other nuns provided. In the first part [of the chronicle], it has already been recounted how sister Esperanza was a slave of Doña Maria Fajardo, sister of the venerable Mother Juana de San Pablo, who married in Veracruz, and who bought Esperanza at 5 or 6 years old, with another, her younger sister, from a sailing vessel that arrived at the port with black Bran2 men and women; all the times that their mistress visited the [convent] founders in the college of San José they [Esperanza and her sister] went with her. Both were baptized in the city of Veracruz, and they named the eldest Esperanza, who is our illustrious black woman. The founders having [already] moved to the city of Puebla, as soon as the dispatch arrived from Rome, Doña Maria Fajardo arrived in this city [Puebla], in the company of her

1 She died in 1679 so Juana de Jesús María wrote it in 1680.
2 Members of the Bran ethnic group (the modern Bram, Gola, or Burama) who were brought to Mexico in the 16th and 17th centuries came from the region that is now Guinea-Bissau.
husband, who died shortly after, leaving his wife doña Maria as his heir; she did not then become a nun because of the constant and distressing ailments that troubled her. But when the final illness arrived, she went to the convent, where she received the habit and professed in articulo mortis [at the point of death] with the name of Maria de la Ascensión, and she left all her property and slaves to the community, as has already been recounted in the account [el notable] of her life. The nuns knowing, then, the natural goodness of Esperanza, decided that, along with her sister, they would enter the service of the community, for a short time, with the permission of the prelates. When the time for them to leave arrived, for it was by then necessary, Esperanza resisted with supplications and pleas, and she even said to them that which the bride said: Daughters of Jerusalem, brides of Jesus Christ, though I am black, I am beautiful, and the powerful King loved me and carried me to his Church and showed me his delights. The sympathetic nuns, with the experience that they had of her innocence [that was] naturally inclined to virtues and spiritual retreat, had to yield, asking permission of the prelate to allow [her to stay]. Since more than a few years had passed [habiéndose pasado no pocos años], they verified with certainty that she was not confirmed, and announcing this news to the bishop, Don Gutierre Bernardo de Quiroz, he then went to the convent to confirm her, giving her the name Juana Esperanza de San Alberto. The grace of this sacrament and that of baptism, in the judgment of Mother Juana, lasted until death; according to what they saw and experienced in her life.

Dealing with her virtues, Mother Juana de Jesús Maria attested that, in the thirty-nine years that she knew her, she always saw her in the same way [en un mismo ser], because her silence was so great that very rarely did she ask anything, unless it was very necessary and urgent. She never interfered in what happened in the convent. Being charged with taking care of the food for the sick, although some [311] pestered her to hurry up, she never responded to them with a word of excuse, only saying: Blessed is God, beloved is Jesus. And saying this with such mildness and humility that she confounded and edified those who tended to argue with her; she never made excuses although she was blamed for some things that were not her fault, so that whenever anything careless or neglectful happened in the kitchen, or anything was poorly done, without her having taken part in it, they blamed her. And never was she heard to talk back or make excuses, saying only, with submissive humility and calm: Blessed is God. Her response confused the nuns; and the sisters of the white veil, as they were always with her in the kitchen, on some of these occasions that they reported, saw her spit up blood with the effort that she made to not respond and to observe [the vow of] silence, when they falsely accused her, imitating in this her beloved Spouse, who [when he stood] accused and slandered before Pilate, [accused by] false witnesses, did not part his lips to excuse himself, nor open his mouth in order to defend himself with such great silence, that it was a wonder of the same presiding judge.

Selection #2 pages 316-317
Later in [her] last years [Esperanza was] so near-sighted that, one winter night after Mother Juana did [religious] exercises, she left the pulpit [tribuna] and went by the choir [coro alto], and she found Esperanza in one of the cloisters, standing propped up against the wall and holding herself up by her staff, frozen with cold, because [Esperanza] had not been able to find her cell, so that when she came up from the kitchen, she stayed most of the night standing, until someone came up to find her, as the mother Juana did. After putting [Esperanza] to bed and wrapping her up, [Juana] went down to the kitchen for a little fire [lumbre] to warm her, and told [Esperanza] not to go down the next day to take communion. [Yet Esperanza] did not [follow her instructions], getting up very early the next morning so as not to miss this divine Sacrament.

We must not forget, nor could [we imagine that it would be] lacking given all her other virtues, the virtue of thanks and gratitude. If anyone gave [Esperanza] any charitable aid, it is not possible to describe the care and thanks she showed, asking after her [who gave her charity] and recommending her to God. The señor doctor don Diego Malpartida Centeno, from the city of Huejotzingo ... who became Dean of the Holy Metropolitan Church of Mexico, who [with his] income and patrimony, did not wait for his death, but rather, while still living he shared his charity with the poor, and also gave money in perpetuity for holy and devout works for his praiseworthy memory, and with the great disappointment that the Lord gave him, when he was presented with the bishopric de Guadiana, he renounced it. After being beloved Father and benefactor of this convent, he loved [amaba] and helped Esperanza with some alms for her attire [vestuario]; for which she thanked him, inquired after and asked about his health, and implored the prelada [female convent official], when she wrote him, to thank him very much from her [and to tell him] that she was continuously thanking the Divine Majesty [asking God] to give [don Diego] prolonged life so that he could spend his life doing good and holy works. When the señoras virreinas entered the convent, [Esperanza] hid, so that no one could find her, nor could anyone see her. Nevertheless, when the Most Excellent lady the Marquesa de Mancera passed through the city, on her return to Spain, she visited the community and revealed her fervent desires to see and know Esperanza, the morena; because of the reports she had heard about her virtue. The Mother Prior sent two nuns to look for her, and finding her confined to her cell, they told her that the Mother Prior had called for her. She left that instant with her staff, because she was already disabled, with a nun supporting her other arm. Later, the Lady Marquesa received her with caring affection [cariñoso amor], having her sit next to her. Her Excellency put various questions to her, and Esperanza, with her eyes lowered to the ground, responded to them all with such great patience and discretion as if she had been raised in the court, leaving all the nuns in admiration of

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3 Presumably the viceroy’s wife and/or other women from the court.
4 The viceroy’s wife.
5 Brown-skinned woman – Esperanza is referred to as a morena and a negra (black woman) in the text.
her. After a long conversation, Her Excellency asked her earnestly if she would pray an Ave Maria for her every day and recommend her to God, to which Esperanza responded: *Every day, Most Excellent Lady, I will pray a station to the Holiest Sacrament*[316] *for you, and hear a mass for you.* Which, gratified, she did faithfully until she was disabled, so much that she could not leave her cell.

*Translated by Joan Bristol and Tamara Harvey.*
FUNDACIÓN Y PRIMERO SIGLO.

DEL MUY RELIGIOSO CONVENTO DE Sª. Sª.
Joseph de Religiosas Carmelitas Descalzas de la Ciudad de
la Puebla de los Ángeles, en la Nueva España, el primero
que se fundó en la América Septentrional, en 27.
de Diciembre de 1604.

GOVERNANDO ESTE OBISPADO EL ILLUS.
tfísimo Señor Doctor D. Diego Romano, quien lo erigió,
y fundó, en virtud de Breve Apostólico de N. M. S. P.
Clemente VIII.

QUE
CON LA SUBSCRIPCIÓN DE CAPÍTULO
25. del Libro 12. del tomo tercero, de la Reforma de los
Descalzos de Nuestra Señora del Carmen de la primitiva
Obervancia, hecha por Santa Theresía de Jesús, en la anti-
quísima Religion, fundada por el Grande Propheta Elías.

ESCRIBE, Y SACA A LUZ.

EL D.ª. D. JOSEPH GOMEZ DE LA PARRA, ANGE-
lopolitano, Colegio del Mayor de Santos, Magíster en la Santa Iglesia
de Michoacán, y después en esta de la Puebla, electo Maestro Escuela,
Examinador Súmovel en los dos Obispados, Catedrático de Prima
de Teología, en los Reales Colegios de S. Pedro, y S. Juan de esta
Ciudad, y Regente de sus Estudios.

Y POR SU FALLECIMIENTO, PROSEGVIDA,
Por el DOCTOR D. JOSEPH MARTINEZ DE LA PARRA, Deca-
ño en la facultad de Sagrada Teología, y Calificador del Santo
Oficio de la Inquisición de este Reyno.

DEDICADA POR LAS RELIGIOSAS DE ESTE CONVENTO,
A NUESTRA Sª. DE EL CARMEN.

CON LICENCIA DE LOS SUPERIORES: EN LA PUEBLA DE LOS ANGE-
les, por la Viuda de Miguel de Ortega, en el Portal de las Flores, Año de 1731.
gracia de Dios, de que tenía hermoscada su alma con el adorno de sus virtudes, cuyo resplandor percibían las religiosas, la apreciaban y estimaban con gran edificación, siendo como fue la piedra preciosa del azabache, que se crió a las orillas del caudaloso torrente, insondable océano de virtudes y santidad, de religión y observancia, como lo es este carmelitano erario de perfección, donde habitaban enclaustradas y encerradas por amantes de la virginidad, veinte sagradas Nymphas y prudentísimas vírgenes; que jamás pasan del número veintiuno, que dejó señalado la hermosa y mejor Diana, la seráfica madre Santa Teresa de Jesús.

De esta insigne morena escribió, después de su muerte, el año de ochenta, un cuaderno la madre Juana de Jesús María, por orden y mandato del señor Santa Cruz, en el cual da dilatada razón de su virtud, por habera conocido treinta y nueve años, añadiendo las noticias que otras religiosas le participaron. En la primera parte, queda ya referido cómo la hermana Esperanza fue esclava de doña María Fajardo, hermana de la venerable madre Juana de San Pablo, que casó en la Veracruz, y en una embarcación que llegó al puerto, de negros y negras branas, compró a Esperanza, que tenía cinco o seis años de edad, con otra hermana suya más pequeña; las cuales, todas las veces que su ama visitaba a las fundadoras en el colegio de San José, iban con ella. Recibieron las dos el santo bautismo en la ciudad de la Veracruz, y le pusieron por nombre Esperanza, mayor, que es nuestra insigne morena. Habiéndose pasado las fundadoras a la ciudad de la Puebla, luego que llegó el despacho de Roma, se vino doña María Fajardo a esta ciudad, en compañía de su esposo, que dentro de poco tiempo falleció, dejando heredera a su esposa doña María; la cual no entró luego a ser religiosa por los continuos y penosos acontecimientos que la molestaban. Mas llegando la última enfermedad, la pasaron al convento, donde recibió el hábito y se le dio la profesión in articulo mortis, y dejó todos sus bienes y esclavos a la comunidad, como queda ya referido en el notable de su vida, con el nombre de María de la Ascensión. Conociendo, pues, las religiosas el buen natural de Esperanza, determinaron que, en compañía de otra, entrasen a servir a la comunidad, por ser tan corta en aquel tiempo, con la licencia de los prelados. Cuando llegó el tiempo de que saliesen, por ser ya necesario, se resistió con súplicas y ruegos Esperanza, y bien podía decirles lo que la esposa: Hijas de Jerusalén, esposas de Jesucristo, aunque soy negra, soy hermosa, y el poderoso Rey me amó y me trajo a su Iglesia y me introdujo en este retrete de sus delicias. Compadecidas las religiosas, con la experiencia que tenían de su sencillez inclinada naturalmente a las virtudes y al recoimiento, la hubieron de dejar, pidiéndole licencia al prelado para que lo permitiese. Habiéndose pasado no pocos años, averiguaron con certidumbre no estar confirmada, y participándole esta noticia al señor obispo, don Gutierre Bernardo de Quiroz, pasó luego al convento a confirmarla, poniéndole por nombre Juana Esperanza de San Alberto. La gracia de este sacramento y la del bautismo, en concepto de la madre Juana, las conservó hasta la muerte; según lo que vieron y experimentaron en su vida.

Llegando a tratar de sus virtudes, la madre Juana de Jesús María certifica que, en los treinta y nueve años que la conoció, siempre la vio en un mismo ser, porque era tan grande su silencio, que rarísimas veces preguntaba alguna cosa, por ser muy necesario y forzoso. Jamás se introdujo en inquirir lo que sucedía en el convento. Habiéndole encargado cuidase la comida de las enfermas, aunque algunas la molestaban porque se
En la caridad, fue esta insigne morena un carbón encendido y abrasado con el fuego del divino amor y de los próximos. De la Sacratísima Virgen, nuestra Señora, dice el seráfico San Buenaventura, porque no sólo fue su imagen la hermosa Sara, mujer del patriarca Abraham, porque parió a Isaac, que se interpreta risa. Y así, María Santísima dio, en sus hijos Jesús nacido de sus purísimas entrañas, el júbilo y alegría de los hombres y de los ángeles, sino también porque Sara en el idioma latino significa carbón encendido, cuyo nombre le conviene a María Santísima que, como un carbón inflamado con el arder de la caridad, siempre estuvo llena y rodada de este divino fuego Hoc bene Mariae convenit quae tamquam carbo ardore charitatis ignea fuit, donde añade el doctísimo padre Fiúde, ser este nombre admirable bastante conveniente y proporcionado a la Santísima Virgen, por su ardentísima caridad. De la hermana Esperanza, por el nativo color negro que le dio la naturaleza, viendo y admirando las obras de su ardiente caridad, podemos decir que fue un carbón encendido e inflamado en el fuego del divino amor, que ardía en su corazón, con el cual fervorosa, cuando en el torno encomendaban y pedían las oraciones de la comunidad para el remedio de algunas almas que estaban en pecado, aplicaba todas sus oraciones y mortificaciones, y con amorosos deseos de que no fuese ofendido su amante Esposo, solicitaba y preguntaba si se habían remediado aquellas almas, y si estaban en gracia de Dios.

Según doctrina, que tenemos ya citada de la seráfica madre Santa Teresa de Jesús, las almas abrasadas con el fuego del divino amor, no hallan quietud ni tienen sosiego sin tener mucho en qué padecer por su amado, y así las mortificaciones y penitencias, por más ásperas y rigurosas que sean, les parecen suaves y ligeras, y sirven de leños con que atizan las llamas que inflaman sus corazones. Sin haber leído ni sabido esta doctrina la hermana Esperanza, el fuego del divino amor, que ardía en su corazón, lo avivaba con los leños de la mortificación y penitencia, el rigor con que se mortificaba, ya hemos visto cómo arrojaba sangre por la boca, por no responder a los descuidos que le imputaban. Toquete a penitencias y mortificaciones exteriores, las hacía tan ocultas y con tanto secreto, que no las pudieron conocer las religiosas. Para tomar disciplina, buscaba tiempo de que nadie la viese y se encerraba a ejercitarla en el gallinero, y otras veces a deshoras de la noche en el coro, cuando estaba desocupado de la comunidad. Los ayunos del orden los observaba con todo rigor, y los más días no se desayunaba
y otras medicinas, con las cuales volvió en sí, y diciéndole las religiosas: Esperanza, ¿si te sientes tan desflaquecida por qué no pedías algo que te confortara? A lo cual no respondió palabra, sino tan solamente mostrando aquella su mortificación, apacibilidad y silencio. Bendiciendo y alabando a Dios, las religiosas la subieron a su celda. Y dentro de poco se recobró de este accidente.

Llegó en los últimos años a estar tan corta de vista que, estando la madre Juana en ejercicios, salió de la tribuna una noche de invierno para pasar al coro alto, y halló en uno de los claustros a Esperanza, parada, arrimada a la pared y deteniéndose del bordón, traspasada de frío, porque no habiendo podido encontrar con su celda, cuando subió de la cocina, se quedó lo más de la noche en pie, hasta que hubiese quien la pudiera llevar, como lo hizo la madre Juana, que después de acostarla y abrigarla, bajó a la cocina por una poca de lumbre para calentarla, y encargándose que no bajase el día siguiente a comulgar, no lo dejó de hacer, levantándose bien temprano por no faltar a recibir este divino Sacramento.

No le faltaba ni podía carecer de estas virtudes de la virtud del agradecimiento y gratitud, si alguna persona le enviaba algún socorro de limosna, no es decible cuán cuidadosa y agradecida se mostraba, preguntando por ella y encomendándola a Dios. El señor doctor don Diego Malpartida Centeno, originario de la ciudad de Huejotzingo, que desde la silla de medio racionero, por sus letras y su virtud, subió hasta primera silla, obteniendo dignísimamente el Deánato de la Santa Iglesia Metropolitana de México, cuyas rentas y su patrimonio, no aguardó a la muerte, sino que, viviendo las repartió en limosnas a los pobres, y también en obras piadosas que dejó dotadas y perpetuas para su loable memoria, y con el gran desengaño que le dio el Señor, siendo presentado por su Majestad para el obispado de Guadalupe, lo renunció. Después de ser amansísimo padre y bienhechor de este convento, amaba y socorría a Esperanza con algunas limosnas para el vestuario; a las cuales agradecida, inquiría y solicitaba saber de su salud, y le rogaba a la prelada que, cuando le escribiese, le pusiése muchos agradecimientos de su parte que estaba continuamente pidiendo a la Divina Majestad le concediese dilatada vida para emplearla en buenas y santas obras. Cuando entraban las señoras virreinas en el convento, se ocupaba, de calidad que no podían hallarla, ni llegó a verla persona alguna. No obstante, cuando pasó por esta ciudad, para volverse a España, la Excelentísima señora Marquesa de Mancera, visitando la comunidad, mostró desde luego los deseos fervorosos, encendidos y especiales que tenía de ver y conocer a Esperanza, la morena; por las noticias que tenía de su virtud. La madre priora envió dos religiosas que la buscasen, y hallándola encerrada en su celda, le dijeron que la llamaría la madre priora. Salió al instante con su bordón, por estar ya impedida, llevándola del otro brazo una religiosa. Luego, la señora marquesa la recibió con cariñoso amor, haciéndola sentar junto a sí. Su Excelencia le hizo varias preguntas, y Esperanza, con los ojos en el suelo, le fue respondiendo a todas con tan gran paciencia y discreción como si se hubiera criado en la corte, quedando admiradas las religiosas. Después de larga conversación, le pidió Su Excelencia encarecidamente que todos los días le rezase un Ave María y que la encomendase a Dios, a lo cual respondió Esperanza: Todos los días, Señora Excelentísima, le rezaré una estación al Santísimo Sa-

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cramento, y le oiré una misa. Lo cual, agradecida, cumplió puntualmente hasta que se impidió, de calidad que no pudo salir de la celda.

Con lo heroico de sus virtudes, no se dude que el Señor le daría muchas y repetidas mercedes en el ejercicio santo de la oración, mas como la escondía y ocultaba con su profunda humildad, ejercitando lo que decía la esposa: Mi amado para mí y yo para Él. Tan solamente Dios y Esperanza sabían lo que le pasaba hablando con su Divina Majestad. Fue tan grande su silencio en este punto, que juzgo, según la relación de la madre Juana, que ni a su confesor le participaba los favores que recibía del cielo, porque en una de las ocasiones que visitaba el señor doctor y Deán, don Diego de Malpartida Centeno, a las religiosas, le dijo a Esperanza: Mira, Esperanza, que no dejes de decirle al padre cuánto tienes en el alma y cuánto te ha pasado en la oración. Y la respuesta de Esperanza fue decirle a su bienhechor: Lo que no he hecho en toda mi vida, había de hacer ahora. Cuya respuesta fue estando ya impedida, y debemos entender que este dictamen de la hermana Esperanza fue originado de su sencillez y simplicidad, y también pudo ser procedido de su profunda humildad y abatimiento; por lo cual, a sus confesores, después de haberse acusado de las culpas y faltas, que en su concepto había cometido, les daría tan solamente razón de las mortificaciones y penitencias para ejercitarlas por obediencia, y ocultarlas los favores que recibió de Dios; pareciéndole que, si lo refería, habría de ser estimada, cuando todo su deseo era ser despreciada y abatida.

Para calificado crédito del humildísimo y abatídísimo concepto que tenía de sí Esperanza, no sólo de su persona por su calidad, sino también respecto de las virtudes, mortificaciones y penitencias que ejercitaba, y que no vivía ni procedía engañada, como dice San Pablo, teniéndose siempre por nada, jamás pensó que pudiese ser algo: Si quis existimat se alqui esse cum nihil sit ipse se ducit. Oigan a la madre Juana de Jesús María refiriendo un admirable suceso; que si entonces fue de gran admiración y ejemplarísima edificación aquella santa comunidad de religiosas, también lo será, leyéndolo a las presentes y venideras, y a todo género de religiosas. Tres años antes de su muerte, vinieron de España dos religiosos carmelitas descalzos, que pasaban por obediencia a otros reinos, fray José de la Concepción y fray Pedro de Jesús, los cuales estando en esta ciudad, visitaron a las religiosas, y con licencia del prelado salió toda la comunidad a verlos, que gozosos de haber visto a las religiosas y haber oído su santa conversación, le dijo uno de ellos a la madre priora, que entonces era la madre Juana de Jesús María: Madre priora, déle Vuestra Reverencia muchas gracias a Dios de tener estos ángeles a su cargo, que se está viendo en sus semblantes el gozo con que están sirviendo a Dios en una vida tan estrecha. Mucho hay aquí de Dios, que no se puede encubrir. La madre Juana preguntó si había bajado Esperanza a conmugar, que la trajesen al locutorio, para que los religiosos alabaran a Dios, y en el interín que la trafían, la madre priora les dio suya relación de su entrada en el convento y de sus virtudes y proceder. Habiendo entrado Esperanza, la sentaron en una sillita, y saludándola los religiosos, les respondía con profunda humildad y debida cortesía. Los cuales, admirados de verla, preguntaron si era profesa. Y respondiéndoles que no lo era, se lamentaron, pidiéndole y encargándole a la madre priora que solicitase con toda eficacia que se le diese el hábito y la profesión, porque habiendo observado tantos años, con tanta perfección, las obligaciones de religiosa, por ser negra no ha de perder tantas in-
The Confession and Dying Warning of Katherine Garret

Executed in 1738 for infanticide, Katherine Garret (Pequot) left "under her own Hand" the following final address, accompanied by an anonymous account of her behavior and religious conversion while she was in prison. Timothy Green of New London published both texts in 1738 as supplemental documents to the Reverend Eliphalet Adams’s thirty-seven-page execution sermon, under the full title A sermon Preached on the Occasion of the Execution of Katherine Garret, an Indian-Servant, (Who was Condemned for the Murder of her Spurious Child,) On May 3d, 1738. To which is Added some short Account of her Behavior after her Condemnation. Together with her Dying Warning and Exhortation. Left under her own Hand.

Adams (1677-1753) began his career as an Indian missionary and served as a popular preacher at the First Congregational Church of New London. Green (1679-1757) published a wide variety of colonial pamphlets, including religious tracts and execution narratives. A copy of the forty-four-page pamphlet is housed at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts; a microform version is available through the Readex Early American Imprints series.

I Katherine Garret, being Condemned to Die for the Crying Sin of Murder, Do Own the Justice of God in suffering me to die this Violent Death; and also Acknowledge the Justice of the Court who has Sentenced me to die this Death; and I thank them who have Lengthened the Time to me, whereby I have had great Opportunity to prepare for my Death: I thank those also who have taken pains with me for my Soul; so that since I have been in Prison, I have had opportunity to seek after Baptism & the Supper of the Lord & have obtained both. I Confess my self to have been a great Sinner; a sinner by Nature, also guilty of many Actual Transgressions, Particularly of Pride and Lying, as well as of the Sin of destroying the Fruit of my own Body, for which latter, I am now to Die.32 I thank God that I was learnt to Read in my Childhood, which

I thank my research assistant, Amanda Bennett, for her transcription assistance.
32. Gratitude for imprisonment, exhortations to honor the Sabbath, and the call to obey parents and masters, which are quite commonplace in dying warnings, exemplify how the genre seeks to enforce social hierarchies and gender norms. Infanticide confessions commonly establish a slippery slope from illicit female sexual activity to lying to conceal a pregnancy to murder.

33. A reference to Original Sin.
34. Prov. 30:17. Although many Native spiritual traditions consider eagles messengers of the Creator and ravens emissaries of the afterworld, a syncretic reading seems unlikely, given that both birds here serve as vehicles of extreme physical violence. If anything, the passage highlights the fact that Garret must refashion indigenous belief and see “other wise” in order to comprehend the Old Testament message of swift and brutal retribution.
35. Garret’s warning to masters to improve their treatment of servants is atypical (although such protests would become more common later in the century). Her racial specificity concerning those servants who should obey their masters is also distinctive.

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has been much my Exercise since I have been in Prison, and especially since my Condemnation. The Bible has been a precious Book to me. There I read, That JESUS CHRIST came into the world to Save Sinners, Even the Chief of Sinners: And that all manner of Sins shall be forgiven, One only Excepted,33 For his Blood Cleanseth from all Sin. And other good Books I have been favoured with, by peoples giving and lending them to me, which has been blessed to me.

I would Warn all Young People against Sinning against their own Consciences; For there is a GOD that Knows all things. Oh! Beware of all Sin, Especially of Fornication; for that has led me to Murder. Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it Holy. Be Sober and wise. Redeem your Time, and Improve it well.

Little Children I would Warn you to take heed of Sinning against God. Be Dutiful to your Parents; For the Eye that Mocks at his Father and despiseth to Obey his Mother, the Ravens of the Valley shall pick it out, and the Young Eagles shall eat it.34 Little Children, Learn to Pray to God; Sit still on the Lord’s Day, and Love your Books.

I would also Warn Servants, Either Whites or Blacks, to be Obedient to your Masters & Mistresses. Be Faithful in your places and diligent: Above all Fear God; fear to Sin against Him: He is our Great Master.

I would also Intreat Parents and Masters to set a good Example before their Children and Servants, for You also must give an Account to God how you carry it to them.35

I desire the Prayers of all God’s People for me, Private Christians, as well as Ministers of the Gospel, that I may while I have Life Improve it aright; May have all my Sins Pardoned and may be Accepted through CHRIST JESUS. Amen.

Katherine Garret.
(by circumstances, finances, or the law) to do. Tellingly, there is no mention of the presence of Pharaoh’s four-year-old boy—only the assertion that she had not been with child since his birth.

In fact, all three women exhibit considerable sophistication in their understanding of the uses of their testimony. Pharaoh recognized that denial was her best option, and, given the level of oppression that the women faced, her response represents a significant challenge to colonial authorities. Since confession might well lead her to the hangman’s noose, she steadfastly denied that she had been with child—despite the considerable evidence (requests for abortifacient roots, telltale spots of blood and milk, the dead body of a baby) and the willingness of her compatriots to testify against her. Sambo’s testimony was assembled into a coherent narrative by the English justices, but her deposition still bears traces of the original questions and answers of her interview. She comes across as a diligent, responsible matron, questioning Pharaoh’s “burley” shape, examining the places where she had lain or sat, and questioning Pharaoh as to “the reason of it.” Similarly, Indian Hannah seems well aware of the colonial laws governing midwifery—either she or her examiner made it clear that she refused to obtain certain roots for Pharaoh, knowing full well that they might cause her to run afoul of the colonial authorities, for whom infanticide was a capital crime.

These depositions reveal both the many voices and the unique circumstances of Native women. At the same time, they expose their subjects’ inevitable enmeshment in colonial legal structures. The literacy of the Native women is one steeped in familiarity with colonial hierarchies, legal institutions, and labor systems. These are not conventional forms of literacy, of course; rather, they are very specific forms, forged only after long acquaintance with the dangers posed by colonial authority. There is no single voice here; there is a multiplicity of voices, rising together—each with disparate strands—to forge a single chorus.

Sarah Simon’s letter is in the Dartmouth College Archives among the papers of Eleazar Wheelock. It is written on one sheet of paper, measuring approximately 12 inches by 7.5 inches, which is folded in half to produce four surfaces for writing. The last side is addressed as follows:

For-
The Re[end] Mr Eleazar Wheelock
At
Lebanon

The letter is marked throughout with inkbLOTS and misspellings, signaling the lack of experience of the writer. In addition, words spill off the left-hand side of the page, many words are hyphenated, and (where the author reached the end of the sheet of paper and opted to finish at the beginning of the next line) some words are simply cut off. There is a great deal of space between the lines—enough for Simon to insert revisions and corrections above the sentence in question. The handwriting is generally neat, but the letter concludes rather abruptly, with lines spaced more closely and a signature squeezed into the final line of the letter, which is written at the very bottom of the page.

Lebanon Crank ye 16th 1769

Re[end] and Hon[ed] Sir

I have been this some time back thinking upon things of Religion, and I think they do not look so {^plain to me} as I have seen them {^and} I have had many wicked thoughts and I do not knowe what I Shall do if I do not ask Somebodys advise about it for I feel very bad about it: I have thought a grte while that I would Come and talk with {^the} Dr but then I thought again that

14. See Hoffer and Hull, Murdering Mothers, 60–64. On abortion during this period, see also Dayton, “Taking the Trade,” 19–49.

15. “Lebanon Crank” is the name of the area of Lebanon in which Moor’s Charity School was situated and the area in which most of the students boarded. Today it is the town of Columbia, Connecticut.
16. I have left the spelling as it appears in the original, and I have marked the author’s inserted passages with a caret in curly brackets, {^}. In the original, the caret is written under the line and the inserted word or words (which are shown here in curly brackets) appear above the line.
Lebanon Fork, Jan. 16, 1765

Mr. and Mrs. Jones,

I have been this some time by thinking upon the things of Religion, and I think they have been in my mind by is I have been thinking, I have great misgivings about my religious thoughts and I know what I should do if I were to myself. Sometimes I have been very sad about it, I have thought upon to write that I would go and talk with God, but then I thought again that it would not be any good. For if I have talked with God many times and I do not mind it much, I must have the more to fear for, for that I should have the more cause to live as the wise man says, I shall have no good. For I have talked with God many times and I do not mind it much, and that has been surprising. Therefore I shall have the more cause to fear for, for that I should have the more reason to live as the wise man says, I shall have no good.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]
it will not do me any good, for I have talkd with the Dr grant many times and
If I do not mind them words that has been alraday said to me I shall have the
more to answer for; so I thought I would not go {^"no"} where to here any thing
{^"or"} no ask any qu as about any but I fear it is the works of Saton; and I have
missed it till I am undone for Ever and I believe that Saton is besser 17 with me
than any body els in this world Even when I go to Read he taks all my thoughts
away upon something Els and many temptation he las before me I thought
I never would not till any body of it but as I was at home this after noon all
alone I was thinking upon these things and wondering what I should do and
I thought of a book I have Read onse that when anyone was at last about any
thing thay must go to thare minister and inquire of them and these {^will} lead
you into it, and then I think it is my duty to Come and take your advise. And I
{^"what"}18 want to know is this am {^"I"} uncurable or not, the devil is jest Redy
sometimes to {^"make me"} think that becuse I have made a perfittion 19 and do
not {^"alwas"} keep upright. and it seems to me all the true Christian never meet
with such a struggle with Saton as I do and so that makes me fear that I am a
Christian becasue the devil is so bese with me more than he is with any one Els
for when I go to try to pray he tills me that it will not do any good nither will
it merat any thing so he try's Every thing to put me back. and o what shall I do
it seem to me I Could wir all this night to you if it would do any good but I
fear it will not. — So I Desire to subscribl my Silfe your most humble and Ever
Duty full searvent Sarah Simons

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Writing Back to Wheelock
One Young Woman's Response to Colonial Christianity

HILARY E. WYSS

The mid-eighth century saw increased possibilities for Native education,
as religious enthusiasm spread in both Anglo-American and Native circles.
Communities of Mohegans, Niantics, Narragansetts, Pequots, Montauks, and
others all hired schoolteachers who generally taught girls as well as boys. And

17. Possibly "busier." See the passage later in the letter where the word "bese" seems to echo this
sentence in that "the devil is so busy" with me.
18. "What" seems to be inserted in the wrong place: The passage is probably meant to read, "And
what I want to know is..."
19. It is unclear what the perversion is that Sarah Simon refers to here. Wheelock's students re-
peatedly confessed to such sins as drinking, fighting, and lewd behavior, but there is no further record
of what Simon considers (or thinks Wheelock will consider) "a perfittion."

while missionary societies were often focused on the education of Native boys,
Native communities—many of which had far more girls than boys available
for anglicized schooling practices—were clearly interested in tending to their
female students and employing Native women as educators. As one observer
reported of the Pequots of Stonington, "They generally inclined to have a school
mistress, and an Indian; Urging that their children were chiefly Girls. I knew not
whether this wd be agreeable to Commissioners, however, allow'd them to make
trial. Several were propos'd, but they could not unite in any." 20

Native girls had other educational possibilities as well: In the eighteenth
century, they were also included in plans for boarding schools such as John
Sergeant's Stockbridge Boarding School and Eleazar Wheelock's Charity
School in Lebanon, Connecticut (albeit hardly on an equal footing with their
male counterparts). 21 Indeed, at Wheelock's co-educational school, Native girls
attended class only one day a week; the boys, in contrast, were in class at least
five days a week. Whereas boys generally lived at the school, girls spent most of
their time boarding with local families, learning the art of housewifery. 22 Even
so, Wheelock's female students learned to write: Approximately six letters
clearly authored and written by female students from the Connecticut school
have been preserved among the hundreds of letters by and about Wheelock's
Indian students, and Wheelock's ledger books indicate regular purchases of
paper for "the female school." 23

Yet writing, the symbolic system most intimately attached to English power
structures, was not self-evidently of benefit to Native women. Whatever edu-
cational opportunities were available, the reality for Native women was that
they had very few opportunities to participate in English colonial structures
to their fullest abilities. As wives, daughters, and servants on Anglo-American
terms, Native women—unlike in most Native communities—were accorded
virtually no political or legal rights. 24 Indeed, although women were increas-
ingly included in writing instruction through the eighteenth century, colonial
presumptions about its suitability for "masculine" pursuits such as business,
The Relation of Patience Boston alias Samson, in her 23d Year. Taken from her Mouth.

I am thus free and void in confessing my heinous Transgressions, with the dreadful Aggravations of them, that I may justify God, and be a Warning to Sinners, especially young People, not to give Way to the beginnings of Sin; but to resist Temptations, and avoid the Occasions of Evil: As also that the sparing Mercy, Long suffering Patience and pardoning Grace of God may be magnified, and many may be excised to praise and glorify the Name of the Lord, and that despairing Sinners may come to hope in God's Mercy, if it may appear that such a Monster of Wickedness is plucked as a Firebrand out of everlasting Burnings, and received into God's Favour through Christ.

After the Jury had bro't in wilful Murder, I was sent to Prison, but got Drunk by the Way, having little Sense of my dreadful Cafe; yet my Temptation in Part was to drink that I might forget my Sorrow. After I was shut up, I encouraged myself that I should have a long Space to repent, and have nothing else to do for most Part of a Year; and I set on Praying and Reading. Day and Night. While I was awake, my Thoughts were upon my former wicked Life, and present woful Condition that I had bro't my self into, by Murdering a poor innocent Child, that never did me Hurt. And I wholly refrained from strong Drink, and desired I might have good Books to read; and seemed glad when any came to Vist
Visit me; but did not at first desire Visits from Ministers, till I found how dear they were to help me, and that I might speak freely to them, and that I needed their Direction. The first Minister that visited me, was the Minister of a neighboring Congregation, (the Minister of the Town being from Home,) He endeavored to shew me my utter Inability to Help myself: I might as well, he said, reach the Heavens with my Arms as turn from Sin to God; leading me in his Discourse to Christ, and Faith in him, with a diligent Use of all Means, in order to a thorough Conversion; telling me I must spend all my Time in Prayer, Reading, and Meditation, as being liable every Day to a natural Death, as well as others. So he pressed me on a speedy Repentance without the least Delay. Those Words seemed to sink down into my Heart, and had an abiding Influence. Thus by variety of Helps, I was lead something into the Knowledge of myself, how unable I was to repent & believe, and how necessary Faith was. I saw it to be really so by plain Scripture, especially by several Places in John, particularly, John 3:16. God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life. So my Mind ran much on Believing in Christ. But I thought I must repent too, and that of all my Sins. And in Reading, Praying, Hearing the Word preached, and Discourse with such as visited me; I thought I had got some Sense of Sin, in many Ways wherein I had practised it from my Childhood. But it troubled me, that I could not see the Sin of Murder, as I concluded I must see it, before God would pardon me. And I had an earnest desire that the Congregation would pray for me, that I might have a further Discovery of the Evil of Sin.
Water, which I saw through the Grates, to have Drowned my self. I wrung my Hands, and beat my Breast, and could have torn into my Vitals, if I had strength to do it. All the while, laying the whole Blame on my self. I had been convinced or could think; my Case seemed desperate, till I seemed to have some Glimmering of Hope, and a Day or two after such Light and Joy, so sweet and good, that I can no more express it, than I can make known the desperate Sorrow and Anguills that went before, in the Extremity of it. It came after the following Manner; I went to Bed one Night, full of Trouble; but not in utter Despair. It was long before I could get any Sleep, as I had before ten whole Nights waking, whilst I meditated on nothing but Terror. But falling asleep at length, I slept I suppose till after Midnight, then awaked in a more calm and easy Frame than I had been for a Week before, when I used sometime to cry out at my first Waking, that I was going to Hell! But now I could think about Believing in Christ. All my Thoughts seemed to run upon Believing, Believing; and I could pray that God would enable me to believe, and give me converting Grace. And it was plain to me that it must be the Almighty Power of God, to make me believe. And I began to hope he would do it for Christ's Sake, being persuaded that he was able to do it for me, having read two Sermons of Dr. In- street Mather's, on 1. — Mighty to save; Wherein he shews that Jesus Christ is a mighty Saviour. For though I had read several Books, yet none of them seemed to plainly to lead me to Christ, as that Book. I had indeed in my Extremity forgotten this, and all Grounds of Encouragement; but now it was a great Help to me, that by Books and Ministers and good Christians both Men and Women, I have been so abundantly directed to Christ, and encouraged to trust in him. And as I lay waking, and musing about this mighty Saviour and about believing in Christ for Salvation; these Words
Words came fresh into my Heart. Wielding may endure for a Night, but Joy cometh in the Morning. I did not remember that ever I had read such Words in the Bible; yet I thought it was God speaking to my Heart. It was not like Man's speaking. Yet after this I was ready to give Way, to some unbelieving Thoughts, that would be rising in my Mind, or were cast into me; till I had another Scripture, which though at first I did not know to be any Part of God's written Word, yet afterwards I found to be Christ's Words to unbelieving Thomas, John 20. 27. Be not faithless, but believing; and it is added, v. 29. Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed; which is further Matter of Comfort to me. I had not seen Christ, with my bodily Eyes; but I think he has spoken to my Heart, by his Spirit; and that I have seen him by the Eye of Faith. Now I was carried out in more free Confession of my Sins, so many and great, and especially the Sin of Murder; and more earnest in my Prayers that God would blot out my Transgressions, and cast my Sins behind his Back, than ever in my Life before. When the Morning came, I looked out, and all Things seemed pleasant and smiling. I thought if I was to be Executed that Day, Death would seem pleasant to me. God seemed now to accept my Prayers and Praises, which could never enter into my Heart to believe, in the Time of my Distress. But I soon found some jealous Thoughts arising in my Mind, lest I might flatter and deceive myself; That such a one as I should ever obtain pardoning Mercy, seemed too good News to be true, and I was full of a false Spirit, and the joy of a Hypocrite. But examining my Heart, I could not find that I depended on any Thing in my self. I had not thought
need of a Saviour; and that it would be just with God to damn it. And I hope I have been enabled to believe for my Child, as well as for my Self:

Afterwards, when I was told I need not be distressed for my Child, either as to its Soul or Body; because it was disposed of into a Family where much Care would be taken for the Welfare of both; I presently thought and said, I had found by woful Experience how little a religious Education would signify without the sanctifying Work of God's Spirit on the Heart. I knew that if Christ would give Grace to my Child it would have Grace, else no Means would avail any Thing... and yet I desire to bless God for a religious Education. If I had not learned to read, and been taught my Catechism, it would have been harder for me to come to the Knowledge of God & Christ.

How are we condemned by the Covenant of Works, and relieved by the Covenant of Grace.

The Reader will excuse it that the Narrative breaks off so abruptly, and will give us have to supply the Deficiency with the following Extracts from the Diary of a Person that was much Conversant with the Deceased, during her Confinement.

Being providentially at the House of the Rev. Mr. Moody, Nov. 21. 1734. The Prison-Keeper's Wife came down in haste, and said she was afraid the Prisoner would be distracted; she was in such Distress. We went up, and found her crying out in a most terrible Manner, such as I never heard the like. She smote her Hands together often, and kept continually lamenting and roaring and shrieking, for I think Hours together, with little Interruption. Some of her Expressions, which she repeated with umتلab Vehemency, ten or twenty Times together, were such as follow:

O I have offended a merciful God! a merciful God! I have offended the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Sin, Sin! &c. &c. Now I find it is an evil and bitter Thing to depart from the Living God! O the Sin of Murder! Murder! Murder! O the Sin of Living! O I tried to play a Sabbath Day! O my putting off my returning to God! O to die Christless! to die Christless, to die without an Interest in Christ! O to part from Christ! To part from Christ! O the Door of Heaven is shut against me! O my God, my God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me! O Patience! Patience! you wicked Wretch, you first forsook God, and then he forlook you! O he is a good God! He is a good God! He is a God of Truth, He will be as good as his Word! He will be as good as his Word! - O God's Anger! God's Anger! God's Anger!

O the Wrath of God! the Wrath of God!

O my dear Soul! my dear Soul! God's Anger is burning in my Soul! O that Fire there is cool, to what I feel in my Soul! - O my Soul is in Hell; my Soul is in Hell! - She had some Interruptions, in which she was more comfortable, and uttered such Expressions as these, I will Pray, I will Pray! I do believe what Christ has said in John, All that the Father gave me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. - I do love God, I have loved him ever since I have known him. * In the Afternoon, and at Night she was I think quite distracted, and through Horror and Amazement of Soul, spake she knew not what her self; such Expressions as I never heard, nor read of. Two Persons sat up with her all that Night, in which she rested but little; tho' the extremity of her Distress and Destruction was only by Fits.
Finally, the opportunity to declare her desire to be baptized, presented itself to her when she least expected it. A wound that she had on her foot had kept her in the village, while most of the women were in the fields harvesting Indian corn. The missionary took this time to make his rounds, in order to instruct at leisure those who remained in their cabins. He entered in that of Tekakwitha. This good young woman could not hide her joy at seeing the missionary: she began immediately to open her heart to him, even in the presence of her companions, about her eagerness to be admitted to the ranks of Christians: she explained to him also the obstacles that she would have to surmount on the part of her family, and, in the first interview, she seemed to have a courage above her sex. The goodness of her nature, the vivacity of her spirit, her naïveté and her candor made the missionary decide that she would one day make great progress in virtue; he applied himself particularly to instructing her in Christian truths; but he did not believe he ought to give in immediately to these entreaties, the grace of baptism had not before been granted to adults, particularly in that country, except with precaution and after lengthy tests. All winter was spent at her instruction and a careful investigation of her morals.

It is surprising that despite the penchant the Savages have for maligning, particularly women [les personnes du sexe], he never found anyone who did not praise the young catechumen: even those who had persecuted her the most sharply, could not refrain from witnessing to her virtue. The missionary no longer weighed whether to baptize [33] her, which she demanded with a holy impatience. She received it on Easter day of the year 1676, and she was named Catherine; it is by this that she will be called in the rest of this letter.

The young neophyte dreamt only of fulfilling the obligations that she had contracted. She did not want to content herself by observing the common practices; she felt herself called to a more perfect life. Beyond the public instruction that she attended regularly, she asked for particular instruction regarding her interior conduct. Her prayers, her devotions, her penances were regulated, and she was so obedient in training herself according to the plan of perfection that had been plotted for her, that in a short period of time she became a model of virtue. She passed several months peacefully enough in that way. Even her relatives did not seem to disapprove of this new way of life that she led. But the Holy Spirit warned us with the mouth of the Sage, that the faithful soul that begins to unite with God must prepare itself for temptation; and it is that which was confirmed in the person of Catherine. Her extraordinary virtue attracted persecutions to her even from those who admired her. They regarded a life so pure as a tacit reproach of their dissoluteness; and with the intention of discrediting her, they endeavored, by various artifices, to attack her purity. The trust that the neophyte had in God, the distrust she had of herself, her assiduity in prayer, her delicacy of conscience which made her dread even the shadow of sin, gave her a complete victory over the enemies of her modesty.

[Translated by Tamara Harvey]
fut arrêtée par l'appréhension d'un oncle de qui elle dépendait absolument, et à qui des raisons d'intérêt dominaient de l'aversion pour les Chrétiens; soit que sa pudeur même la rendit trop timide, et l'empêchât de découvrir ses sentiments au missionnaire.

Enfin, l'occasion de déclarer le désir qu'elle avait d'être baptisée, se présenta à elle lorsqu'elle y pensait le moins. Une blessure qu'elle s'étoit faite au pied l'avait retenu au village, tandis que la plupart des femmes faisaient dans les champs la récolte du blé d'Inde. Le missionnaire prit ce temps-là pour faire sa tournée, et pour instruire à loisir ceux qui étoient restés dans leurs cabanes. Il entra dans celle de Teghankuita. Cette bonne fille ne put retenir sa joie à la vue du missionnaire; elle commença d'abord par lui ouvrir son cœur, en présence de ses compagnes mêmes, sur l'empressement qu'elle avoit d'être admise au rang des Chrétiens; elle s'expliqua aussi sur les obstacles qu'elle auroit à surmonter de la part de sa famille, et, dans ce premier entretien, elle fit paraître un courage au-dessus de son sexe. La bonté de son naturel, la vivacité de son esprit, sa naïveté et sa candeur firent juger au missionnaire qu'elle ferait un jour de grands progrès dans la vertu; il s'appliqua particulièrement à l'instruire des vérités chrétiennes; mais il ne crut pas devoir se rendre sitôt à ses instances, la grâce du baptême ne devait s'accorder aux adultes, surtout dans ce pays-ci, qu'avec précaution et après de longues épreuves. Tout l'hiver fut employé à son instruction et à une recherche exacte de ses mœurs.

Il est surprenant que malgré le penchant que les Sauvages ont à médire, surtout les personnes du sexe, il ne s'en trouvât aucune qui ne fît l'éloge de la jeune cathécumène: ceux mêmes qui l'avoient persécutée le plus vivement, ne purent s'empêcher de rendre témoignage à sa vertu. Le missionnaire ne balança plus à lui administrer le baptême, qu'elle demandoit avec une sainte impatience. Elle le reçut le jour de Pluies de l'année 1676, et elle fut nommée Catherine; c'est ainsi que je l'appellerai dans la suite de cette lettre.

La jeune néophyte ne songea plus qu'à remplir les engagements qu'elle venoit de contracter. Elle ne voulut pas se borner à l'observation des pratiques communes; elle se sentoit appelée à une vie plus parfaite. Outre les instructions publiques auxquelles elle assistoit régulièrement, elle en demandoit de particulières pour sa conduite intérieure. Ses prières, ses dévotions, ses pénitences furent réglées, et elle fut si docile à se former selon le plan de perfection qui lui avoit été tracé, qu'en peu de temps elle devint un modèle de vertu. Elle passa de la sorte quelques mois assez paisiblement. Ses parents mêmes ne parurent pas désapprouver le nouveau genre de vie qu'elle menoit. Mais le Saint-Esprit nous avertit par la bouche du Sage, que l'amie fidèle qui commence à s'attirer à Dieu, doit se préparer à la tentation; et c'est ce qui se vérifia en la personne de Catherine. Sa vertu extraordinaire lui attira des persécutions de ceux mêmes qui l'admiraient. Ils regardoient une vie si pure comme un reproche tacite de leurs dérèglements; et dans le dessein de la décrediter, ils l'efforçoient, par divers artifices, de donner atteinte à sa vertu. La confiance que la néophyte avoit en Dieu, la défiance qu'elle avoit d'elle-même, son assiduité à la prière, sa délicatesse de conscience qui lui faisott appréhender jusqu'à l'ombre même du péché, lui donnèrent une victoire entière sur les ennemis de sa pudeur.

L'exactitude avec laquelle elle se trouvait tous les jours de fête à la chapelle, fut la source d'un autre orage qui vint fondre sur elle du côté de ses proches. Le chapelet récité à deux chœurs est un

T. IV.
Anna Maria Schuchart, Pietist Woman in Early Modern Germany

Background information (adapted from Beiler, Rosalind. “Migration and Loss of Spiritual Community: The Case of Daniel Falckner and Anna Maria Schuchart.” In Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany. Lynne Tatlock, ed. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 369-95.)

In early December 1691, Anna Maria Schuchart, the illiterate, single daughter of a mason, recited two hundred Bible verses she did not know previously and began to have visions in which she could discern whether city officials were good or evil and going to heaven or hell. For the next two years, Schuchart continued to recite verses, sing songs, prophesy, and sweat blood while in trances. Schuchart was one of several young women in the cities of Erfurt, Halberstadt, and Quedlinburg (in Thuringia and Saxony) to have ecstatic religious experiences in the early 1690s. Civil and religious leaders questioned whether their visions were from God, the devil, or the result of medical conditions. Several, including Schuchart, were incarcerated and questioned at length.

Schuchart and her friends participated in religious renewal movements sweeping through central Europe in the last decades of the seventeenth century. Because of their emphasis on individual piety and devotional life, their opponents called them “Pietists.” In Erfurt, Pietism emerged in the years after 1687 when Joachim Justus Breithaupt and August Hermann Francke became clergy in the city. Francke had been a student in Leipzig, where he had played a key role in a movement among university students who met in collegia or small Bible study groups modeled on Philipp Jakob Spener’s plan for improving the university theological training of future clergy. When Leipzig officials banned the meetings, many of Francke’s fellow students followed him to Erfurt, where they took jobs as tutors to the children of wealthy citizens. By late September 1691, however, Pietists in Erfurt created such a stir that officials not only banned meetings in homes for Bible study but also relieved Francke of his duties and banished him. Nevertheless, Erfurt Pietists continued to gather in homes. These small groups (as well as those in neighboring cities) included people of all ages and different social classes—from artisans to students to clergy to merchants. They set into motion what historian Ryoko Mori has called the “second wave” of Pietism. The collegia that began as a program of reforms within universities and churches led by theologians and clergy evolved into a renewal movement outside of institutionalized leadership. When young people, servants, and women appeared to convey messages of God’s judgment against religious and civil authorities, tensions mounted. It was in this context that Schuchart began to have visions.

Primary source texts:

About her conversion: “[Schuchart] began to recognize her previously miserable condition” and was so powerfully drawn to God “through the repeated exhibition of punishments that she had earned through her sins, as also the glory of Christ and the elected status she would be able to enjoy with her savior in Paradise, if she remained constant in goodness” (Crophius, Schuchart hat “ihren vorigen elenden Zustand zu erkennen angefangen,” und sei “durch so offtmalige Vorzeigung der Straffe, so sie mit ihren Suenden verdienet, wie auch der Herrlichkeit Christi und deuer Ausserwehten, so sie mit ihrem Heylande im Paradiess, wenn sie im guten bestaendig bliebe, zu geniessen haben wurde, so kraefftig zu Gott gezogen
This made such an impression on her “that she prayed for a change of her heart and a return to him [God], beseeching the love of God for an hour long lying on her face, upon which she also felt relief in her heart, [and] began to change her life through God’s grace (Crophius 1692, 239; DeBoor, “Anna Maria Schuchart,” 163).

“After several days she became faint so that she had to stay in her bed in the sitting room, where Satan did not bother her further externally but tormented her with his ghosts.” “But in a dream in the night, sometime around the beginning of November 1691, she had another hard fight with him [Satan], until around midnight, when she finally, after withstanding much anxiety and wrestling, called out happily: Now I’ve weakened the enemy” (Crophius 1692, 239; DeBoor, “Anna Maria Schuchart,” 164).

“Not long after this, [Shuchart was] attacked for the first time with a numbness in her whole body; also, as she finally managed, as it was still happening(?) to come back out [of the numbness], [she] fell into a very soft sleep, in which she delivered two very beautiful and heartfelt confessions of the love of God (as those who were there can attest), also, after a while, called out God’s answer: be comforted my daughter, you are forgiven your sins” (Crophius 1692, 239f; DeBoor, “Anna Maria Schuchart,” 164-5).

“Also in the same first vision, she spoke with much vigor about many other ingenious things, also sayings from the Holy Scriptures (that were otherwise completely unknown to her, since, as already noted, she was poorly educated, so that she could barely pray the Lord’s prayer)” (Crophius, 1692, 240; DeBoor, “Anna Maria Schuchart,” 165).
“Also at that time and in the following days regarding several people in Erfurt whom she had otherwise never seen or known in her entire life, but nevertheless, whenever they were named by name, during her rapture as she lay completely stiff and with closed eyes, also as no one stood by her bed who could have whispered something to her, she spoke to them and made such disclosures, perhaps a short admonition as it was sent to her, regarding the hidden conditions of their hearts” (Crophius, 1692, 240; DeBoor, “Anna Maria Schuchart,” 165).

From Georg Heinrich Brueckner, Pietist in Erfurt:

“So far she has had no ecstasies; alone it is glorious and wonderful to hear, that she chants daily in glorious melodies making several hundred verses, mostly looking out of the window. Most of them are about the approaching reunion and home-coming of the children of God, of their eternal joy” (Georg Heinrich Brueckner to Joachim Justus Breithaupt, Dec. 1691, as quoted in Theodor Wotschke, “Der Pietismus in Thueringen,” Thueringisch-Saechsische Zeitschrift fuer Geschichte und Kunst 18 (1929):4-5).

DeBoor, p. 165-6: Then came Brueckner’s second report from Dec. 18, 1691. This happened in the evening around 6 o’clock when he was with her and also found guests there – including his “table mate” Crophius. According to Brueckner, Schuchart lay “in an ecstasy, spoke the most glorious verses/approximately two hundred in a half an hour/and without hesitation, so that I was amazed/through which God wanted to convince us/that we have had many scruples about her condition/that he is powerful in this tool [Schuchart] that has turned to him.”

“Auch damals und folgende Tage wegen einiger Personen in Erfurth, so sie sonsten ihr lebtag nie gesehen noch gekennnet, aber doch, wenn selbige zeitwahender ihrer Entzuekkung, da sie ganz starr und mit verschlossenen Augen gelegen, auch niemand beym bette gestanden, der ihr etwas einblasen haette koennen, mit Namen genennet, und etwan eine kurze Ermahnung, so sich auf sie schickte, zu ihnen geredet, solcherley Eroeffnungen gethan, so den verborgenen Zustand ihres Hertzens…betroffen” (Crophius, 1692, 240; DeBoor, “Anna Maria Schuchart,” 165).


“in Ecstasi, redet die herrlichsten Verse/ueber eine halbe Stunde wohl ohngefaehr zwey hundert/und solche ohne Haesitation, dass ich erstaunete/dadurch uns Gott wolte ueberzeugen/die wir uns ueber ihren Zustand viel Scrupel gemacht/dass er in diesem zu ihm bekehrten Werkzeuge kraefftig sey” (EN 1692, B4a-C1a; DeBoor, “Anna Maria Schuchart,” 165-6).