Workshop Title: “Female Sexuality Between the Sacred and the Profane”
Saturday, June 16, 2018: 2:00-3:30 pm
Workshop Session V: Choice II/Collectivities II

Organizers:

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Workshop Description:

This workshop explores how women’s sexuality was enacted and configured in the early modern world. More specifically, we engage the theme of “Choice” by examining how women negotiated the demands placed upon their bodies and how they performed sexual agency. Recent scholarship in art history, history, and literature has revealed a nuanced range of possibilities for female action and imagination relating to the body and sensuality: a range that moves beyond the well-known models of the Virgin Mary, on the one hand, and Mary Magdalene, the reformed prostitute, on the other. Although our own research focuses on Spain and its empire, we are keen to draw connections from across the early modern world, and across academic disciplines.

In the workshop, we will discuss an array of sources that elucidate the various registers in which female sexuality operated in early modern culture. Key examples include the eroticized religious imagery found in spiritual autobiographies and paintings of ecstatic sacred imagery as well as in often-obscene proverbs, literary texts, and bawdy and blasphemous “propositions” recorded by the Inquisition. By examining these materials,
we hope to generate a rich discussion of female sexuality in various cultural and social roles, including (but not limited to):

(1) as mystical metaphor, in which nuns envisioned physical union with God;
(2) as a source of humor in popular and literary discourse, often of a grotesque and misogynistic nature, as in picaresque novels and proverbs;
(3) as an aspect of holy figures in the popular imagination, as in satirical vitae of saints, blasphemy, and parodic poetry (coplas);
(4) as a bodily function and object of medical discourse;
(5) as a moral issue, subject to theological censure and regulation (fornication, lust, “self-pollution”).

We will open the session with a brief (20-minute) introduction to the source material and its contexts and will also provide a handful of discussion questions to frame the conversation.

Tanya Tiffany will consider the “sacred” by discussing the role played by visual culture in the erotic religious experiences of Spanish nuns. She will address particular case studies, such as the widowed nun, Isabel de Jesús (1586-1648), who had endured her miserable marriage by imagining that her earthly husband was Saint Joseph: a figure portrayed as appealingly handsome in seventeenth-century painting and sculpture.¹ Tanya will also explore erotic spirituality as expressed in paintings by nuns, among them the sisters Cecilia del Nacimiento (1570-1646) and María de San Alberto (1568-1640), whose suggestive images of Christ were informed by mystical practice.²

Katrina Olds will introduce the excerpts from the realm of the “profane,” that is, from literary and historical sources regarding women, the body, and sexuality in non-religious contexts. These will include excerpts from erotodidactic literature, a genre of texts that answered common questions about the body and its sexual functions from a matter-of-fact and medical perspective, such as the late fifteenth-century The Mirror of Coitus. She will also help frame the selections from materials that were intended to be obscene and/or humorous, and in which prostitutes exemplified female lust and sexual

activity. These include, for example, the bawdy Carajicomedia, an anonymous early sixteenth-century poem regarding an impotent man’s attempt to remedy himself by revisiting the many women he had known intimately, in exchange for money. Katrina will also introduce excerpts from a novella by the seventeenth-century author María de Zayas who, as scholars have noted, treated “lost” and “fallen” women in a manner that often transgressed the line between obscenity and respectability.

Both the introductions and readings will serve as conversation-starters, and we welcome additional examples and questions from workshop attendees.

List of Readings (included below):


Domínguez, Frank A. Carajicomedia With an Edition and Translation of the Text. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2015. Please read stanzas 1-13; 68-75 (pp. 358-69; 416-23: the English translation appears on the odd-numbered pages); (OPTIONAL: pp. xi-xiii; we have also included the original Spanish stanzas on pp. 358-69; 416-23, even-numbered pages).
Untold Sisters

Hispanic Nuns in Their Own Works

Revised Edition

Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlau
Translations by Amanda Powell

2010

University of New Mexico Press | Albuquerque
3 The Poor Pray More
A Peasant Nun (Isabel de Jesús)

When Isabel de Jesús (1586–1648) complains to God that everybody mocks her, he responds in a vision with “mira, yo obré en ti una de las grandes obras que he obrado después de mi Encarnación” [56] (look, I am working in you one of the greatest works that I have worked since my Incarnation). The interchange illustrates how visions could confer status and power on an illiterate peasant woman in a real-life enactment of the biblical dictum that “the lowliest shall be the highest.” Time and again Madre Isabel, who dictated her life story to a richer choir nun, affirms her own spiritual exemplarity and her intimacy with divine being. Although it was recorded on paper, the text remains an oral history. Utilizing proverbs, popular wisdom, and an unshakable faith in the reality of her visions, Isabel de Jesús describes and analyzes a world determined by her religious culture, her class, and her status as a woman, proving the truth of her inner experiences and developing a popularized theological discourse.

From Lowliest to Highest

Madre Isabel de Jesús is the only writer treated in our study who experienced the common lot of women: marriage, sex, children. Born into a family of nine children whose shepherding parents eked out a meager living, she grew up tending a flock on wild mountainsides. As a frightened young girl, filled with loneliness and menaced by wolves, she found guidance and protection in the form of visits from Christ and a host of heavenly figures. Their company became the foundation of her permanent modus vivendi. Madre Isabel’s father died when she was still a child, and her mother died shortly after she was fourteen. Their deaths created a vacuum that Christ filled for the rest of her life. In one of her visions Jesus asked her to tend his lambs as she had tended those of her parents. He promised to answer her cries of distress, as her father once had (265). In her early visions Christ played the role of a paternal substitute, responding lovingly to manifestations of fear from her little daughter. Seeing Christ in this way became her design for survival.
Madre Isabel's was a difficult life. As the youngest in the family, she was assigned the newborn lambs and the old sheep that couldn't keep up with the flock. Madre Isabel claims that her mother taught her faith and charity. But her mother also bowed to the pressure of one of her sons-in-law and married off Isabel against her will when the girl was fourteen. Isabel's husband was a toothless old man, and when he took her from town to town the villagers taunted her for having made such a poor marriage. The move made Isabel yearn for the tranquility of the pastures where she had found solace in God.

Like many, if not most, girls (and almost all subjects of hagiographic literature), the young Isabel had dreamed of dedicating herself to a religious life. Monastic seclusion offered an escape from subjection to the world's immorality, which was condemned each day in church. But everything militated against escape. Survival always hung precariously in the balance, easily threatened by natural disasters, fluctuations in market prices, and family crises. By age fifteen, she was pregnant.

Two more pregnancies followed. All three of her children were sons and all three died—one at birth, one in infancy, and another at age three. Her husband also became ill—and incontinent.

The narrative of her life as nursemaid to her chronically ill husband, servant in a rich employer's house, and agricultural laborer recalls the picaresque novels of her era. But here the hero is a woman. To keep the family going, Isabel worked hard at a variety of jobs: making bread, cleaning houses, serving in a Franciscan monastery. Madre Isabel's marriage was particularly unhappy; she experienced it as a twenty-four-year torment. To overcome the trial, she withdrew as frequently as possible into an inner world populated with holy friends to whom she was devoted. (Her preferred companions included twenty-one she referred to by name, as well as the Apostles, the eleven thousand virgins, and all the saints [562–63]; the Holy Trinity "of the earth"—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—heads the list.) She survived the disgust marital sex aroused in her, for example, by imagining her husband was Saint Joseph.

When her husband died, her relatives attempted to marry her off again. To escape this fate, she took work as a servant in another village. She left her own town early in the morning, hoping that no one would see her, but the aunt who served as her mother after her own mother's death begged her to stay (118). Of her dispute with her family when she became a widow, she says, "Todos eran tiritos al corazón de carne, y sangre" [117] (It all served to twist the knife in my wounds; literally, in my heart of flesh and blood). Madre Isabel's visions and powerful interpretative faculties reestablished her equilibrium. It may have been precisely these faculties that averted the tragic end suffered by her sister, who died young and in chains—the treatment commonly used for madness in those days.

Isabel became increasingly observant over the years, hastening to communion and confession with a zeal that aroused the resentment and suspicion of the townspeople. In her thirties, she had repeated trouble with male clergy and confessors regarding her outspoken religiosity; the troubles continued even when she finally entered religious life. When, in 1623, nuns were imported from Salamanca to found an Augustinian convent at Villa de Arenas in the province of Toledo, Isabel applied to be a servant. But two priests who knew her informed the nuns that she had been treated for possession by devils. Predictably, the nuns refused her services, saying that they already had two mad Sisters in the convent and they would not take a chance with another. Isabel was finally admitted to the convent three years later, after first working as a lay aide to Discalced Franciscan monks. By proving her capacity for toil, she was able to find other clergyman to support her application to the nunneries.

Still, several of her Sisters in the convent treated the new arrival with suspicion and resentment and gossiped about her. In the convent, Madre Isabel was burdened by an antagonistic confessor for fifteen years as well. Reports of their dialogues indicate that he either resented or disbelieved Christ's interest in her. Wary of her readiness to interpret visionary conversations with God, he commanded Madre Isabel to dwell on her sins instead. Compliance brought her misery, as scenes of hell supplanted heavenly ones in daily meditations. But God naturally took Madre Isabel's side: "cuando me tenía tan oprimida mi confesor, me hacía su Magestad muchas, y señaldas Mercedes" [169] (while my confessor so oppressed me, my Lord and God showed me many, and most outstanding, favors). Although she claimed to accept her confessor's treatment as a part of her imitation of Christ's suffering on earth, she also criticized him openly in her text for saying her mystical raptures were tricks of the Devil.

A change of confessors and her growing reputation as a visionary led in 1645—four years after the change and nineteen after becoming a lay nun—to the writing of her Vida. Some Churchmen consistently objected to her writing. Other ecclesiastic leaders and censors recognized that in turbulent times, when so many Christians were tempted to join heretical cults or simply fall away from the Church, it might be auspicious to publicize such a naively charismatic eloquence.4

Isabel de Jesús's writing reveals that she saw the paradox of Christ's teaching—that the lowliest shall be the highest—working in her favor. Some priests and confessors saw her as a vehicle of Augustinian aims: bringing the wayward back to the fold; tempering the cult of Mary (marianism) in favor of devotion to Christ; participating, nevertheless, in the campaign to pronounce the Immaculate Conception to be dogma; and increasing faith and charity among the rich and faith and humility among the poor.5 Madre Isabel implored, exhorted, cajoled, and encouraged the repentance of sinners, the correction of those "hanging too loose from God." She could speak to peasants and laborers in their own language as many ecclesiastics could not.

Her life and text illustrate the Church's capacity to encompass popular forms of religious experience and expression that in a strict sense were unorthodox or marginal. At the same time, they illustrate the necessity of toeing the line. Names she adopted (such as pobre labrador, or humble laborer) and those given her by the clergy who endorsed and authorized her text in prefaces (such as pastorcilla, or little shepherdess) bear witness not only to fervent religiosity but to Church politics and her peasant astuteness as well. In any case, her portrayal of people's lives as they were lived constitutes an important contribution to the understanding of seventeenth-century Spanish history.

Madre Isabel grounded her language in the experience of a peasant girl, wife, and mother of Castile. She had spent thirty-eight years in these roles before
Writing as Speaking, Speaking as Writing

The Vida that Madre Isabel dictated during the last three years of her life was not published until almost thirty years after her death. The Life of the Venerable Madre Isabel de Jesús, Augustinian Recollect of the Monasterio de San Juan Bautista in the village of Arenas. Dictated by her, with an addition telling of her blessed death consists of three parts. Book 1 (3-152) recounts her life before entering the convent. Book 2 (153-398) covers her years as a lay nun. Book 3 (399-470), written by her confessor, contains the requisite description of Madre Isabel’s death, information about her secretary Inés del Santísimo Sacramento and the collaboration that gave birth to the text, and the testimony of eyewitnesses and others familiar with Madre Isabel’s religious virtues.

Twenty years before their collaboration began, Madre Inés del Santísimo Sacramento had noted Isabel de Jesús’s saintliness, to which she attests in book 3 of the Vida. Madre Inés had an uncle who was the Prelate responsible for issuing licenses to enter the convent (437). At Madre Inés’s urging, the uncle helped Isabel de Jesús to profess. Madre Inés also prompted the male authorities to request the jointly produced Vida. According to Madre Inés, the alliance was beneficial in several ways. Her own health and spirits improved, and if Madre Isabel prayed for her during Mass, Madre Inés’s drowsiness, which often led her to fall asleep, would vanish. Most significantly, soon after the manuscript was completed, Madre Inés became Abbess of the convent.

Inés del Santísimo Sacramento was the one person in the world for whom Isabel de Jesús expressed love. As the transcriber of Madre Isabel’s visionary life, she was privy, in a way the priests and confessors could not be, to Madre Isabel’s innermost thoughts and feelings. That a person of higher rank was serving one of lower status created a fashionable paradox—an enactment of the lowest becoming the highest. Curiously, not until two hundred pages into the text does the author actually mention her secretary; then she calls her variously “Ines” (201), “la secretaria” (264), and “mi Inés del Sacramento” (208). Through the dictating process, they developed an intimacy that stretched the boundaries of the official mandate of the Church against formation of bonds of friendship with others.

Their work sessions took place at night after both women had finished their chores. Madre Inés reports that she would send a mental signal and, sensing it was time for their work to begin, Madre Isabel would hasten from prayers to Madre Inés’s cell. A shaft of light would illuminate the sheet being written upon, the writing hand, or the completed text (397, 432). “[V]eo de ordinario una Hermosa luz... cuando estamos escribiendo” (397) (I usually see a beautiful light... as we are writing), Madre Isabel states, in a rare but pointed use of the first-person plural. Despite such signs of supernatural approval, Madre Isabel expressed concern at taking up Madre Inés’s time, because her skill in embroidery made her a valuable asset to the finances of the impoverished convent.

But each woman was under a vow of obedience, the one to recount her exemplary life and the other to act as scribe. Although it was a product of that obedience, their relationship provided an intimate refuge for both amid the inevitable conflicts of living in community. Madre Isabel emphasizes their spiritual bond and makes a clear distinction between how close she feels to Madre Inés and how distant from her other Sisters. Once, she contrasts Madre Inés with the nun who served as nurse in the cloister; the nurse had come looking for Madre Isabel when she fainted and entered an ecstatic state:

Ignorando ella mi enfermedad, porque estas cosas son para Dios y el alma, y para alguna familiar amiga: como lo es mi hija Inés del Santísimo Sacramento, por cuya mano pasan los favores recibidos. (210-11)

(He was unaware of my illness, because such things are only for God and the soul, and for some close friend, such as my Daughter Inés del Santísimo Sacramento, through whose hands pass the favors I receive.)

As the last phrase suggests, Madre Isabel envisioned words traveling from her mouth through Madre Inés’s hand to paper, seeing this as analogous to a holy event. She depicts the transcription process as almost magical at times and implies that just as the priest’s hands accomplished the transformation of the wafer into Christ’s body, Madre Inés’s hands were the instrument of another holy transformation—from oral to written narrative.

Structure, Style, and Sources

The spiritual autobiography that takes up the first two books of the Vida is replete with descriptions of visions and comments about religion, human nature, and the writing process. Although a rough chronology structures the text, the progression is shaped more by Madre Isabel’s inner life than by the calendar. The author always lifts the narrative from its moorings—which can be a familiar time and place, a specific piece of art, or a particular fantasy—into the realm of the sacred. As the work continues and Isabel de Jesús gains greater self-confidence, her discussion of religious issues, biblical exegeses, imitations of sermons, and fragmentary references to life around her become more intricately entwined.

Madre Isabel often comments in passing on the difficulty she has had in ordering the narrative: “Me parece que lo dejo dicho, y si no vuelvan a mi, sí no me he muerto. Otro día después de haber comulgado” (141) (It seems to me that I have already told this, and if not, come remind me, if I haven’t died. Another day after taking communion); “Me olvidaba de decir una merced” (146) (I forgot to describe another blessing); “Dejando esto aquí, quiero volver a declarar” (356) (Leaving this matter aside, I want to go back and declare); and “Ahora tengo de hablar de” (362) (Now I have to talk about). Madre Isabel also expresses her dissatisfaction with the completed text: “No me parece que dejo bien declarado algunos puntos arriba, y antes de desviarme más quiero volver a ello” (96) (I think that I left some points unclearly stated, and so before I go further from that topic I want to return to it); and “No me acuerdo si dejo bien declarado arriba” (96) (I don’t remember if I said
the Holy Family and brought together characters from classical mythology and the Bible. Medieval sculpture depicted maladies and sinfulness in the form of demons and humans. On a single canvas El Greco painted earth and heaven, each with its personages, interacting yet within their own realm. Velázquez related working women who wove tapestries to the sacred scenes they created, intermingling classical and Christian motifs, peasants and Bacchus, drunks, laborers, and gods. In Madre Isabel’s work a similar worldview comes through: on earth, fields are tended and housework is performed, while in a visible heaven holy beings take care of matters of the soul. Biblical characters—sometimes disguised, sometimes not intervene in human affairs. Angels and devils stalk land and sky. While women of the village sweep their houses, Madre Isabel cleanses her soul (40). Or as she sweeps, she expects to accomplish both a material and a moral cleansing (see the Palm Saturday episode in Texts and Translations).

Devils were real to Madre Isabel and her contemporaries and were the cause of all human and natural troubles. Here, for example, she explains how her leg became crippled:

Cargaron sobre mi tres demonios sobre la pierna derecha, fueron espantosos, el uno cargaba hacia la rodilla . . . y los otros dos estaban por cima de aquél . . . Tenía omnipiada la pierna, y atormentadas [sic], sirviéndome de laosa pesada: . . . tanto, que no me podia sustentar sobre ella. (181)

(Three devils were leaning hard on my right leg; they were dreadful; one held on by the knee . . . and the other two were on top of him . . . My leg was squeezed tight and in torment, like a heavy stone to me . . . so painful that I could not stand on it.)

The first of these devils had horns, “como acá suelen pintar” (38) (as they paint them in these parts). All three “tienen las caras a modo de unas mascaras, que acá pintan de figuras de demonios espantables” (38) (had faces like the masks they paint in these parts to show the faces of frightening devils).

Art and artists served as Madre Isabel’s visionary medium through which to develop spiritual analogies. As she saw it, in an original variation of a standard theological concept, God himself, as an artist, molded her:

[Dios] también me ha dicho que es famoso Escultor. . . . me puso . . . la rodilla derecha encima, diciéndome que quería tenerme clavada debajo de su voluntad para labrarne, y sacarme a gusto suyo. (22) (29)

([God] has also told me He is a celebrated Sculptor. . . . He put . . . His right knee on top of me, saying He wanted to have me nailed down by His will in order to fashion me to His taste.)

In her youth, Madre Isabel must have watched artists at work in her village. Later, she created vivid descriptions of the images they made of wood, enamel, metal, paper, and stone. In this vision, for example, she describes in detail an angel carrying a cross in his hand:

it well above). Her frustration at not being able to read and write adds poignancy to a commonly stated yearning: “Yo quisiera saber darme a entender” [97] (I wish I knew how to make myself understood).

On occasion, Madre Isabel also laments that external circumstances have affected the production of her text, as in this passage in which she directly addresses the reader:

En lo que dejo declarado acerca de este sacerdote, se me quedó mucho por decir, y de otras muchas cosas, porque voy de paso, parte por no ser cansada, y parte porque va cumpliendo mi Prelada su trámite, y me ha mandado que me dé prisa, para que quede en su tiempo: yo también gasto de ellos, porque no querría que lo alcanzase a saber nadie. (71)

(If I have said about this priest, I have a great deal more to say, and the same with many other things, because I am quickly going, partly in order not to be tiring and partly because my Priores is completing her three year term and has ordered me to hurry, so that this will be done in her time: I too would like to finish, because I wouldn’t want anybody to find it out.)

She is reassured in a vision that those external circumstances will not prevent the completion of her work. Christ reminds her that just as in childhood she and her amber were threatened, now her nearly completed manuscript is in danger. Her enemies in old age have become killer wolves (“lobos carniceros”), but her divine shepherd-father, as always, will answer her call for protection. Christ then advises her that although her writing has caused an uproar since she handed it in to her Superiors, once her confessor reads it he will understand and benefit.

Madre Isabel speaks as Saint Teresa might have wished to—without any literary pretension at all. In recounting her visionary life she generously employs colloquial usages, popular sayings and images, and depictions of scenes from daily life. Her language is steeped in the culture of the period, drawing from the liturgy, the vernacular of her region, and both sacred and profane literary sources, such as proverb, various song forms, the literature of chivalry, pastoral poetry, theater, and of course the Bible. Lines from widely sung courtly ballads appear in passages describing her love for Christ. The paintings and sculpture she contemplated in church, along with popular statues, masks, and costumes made for religious festivals in her town and nearby villages, are the stuff of her mystical imagination. Echoes of her childhood terrors and sadness, of the long and wretched marriage, and of the death of her babies also surface time and again in her religious fantasies.

Madre Isabel de Jesús lived on two planes, the natural and the supernatural, and frequently combines them in her narrative. “Llegué a mi casa despues de puesto el sol, aunque en mi alma no se pusel divino que la alumbraba y alumbraba” [43] (I arrived home after the sun had set, although the divine sun that was shining and still shines in my soul did not set). Her simultaneous representation of the sacred and the profane often resembles popular theater of her time, medieval sculpture, or canvases by El Greco (The Burial of the Count of Orgaz) and Velázquez (The Weavers, The Drinkers, The Forge of Vulcan). Popular theater presented lively scenes of
Llevaba un geroglífico, revuelto en la Santísima Cruz, y al pie de ella una corona de espinas, y una muerte, con dos huesos atravesados en la boca, semejante a los que pintan por aci. (88)
(He carried a hieroglyph, wrapped in the Holy Cross, and at its foot a crown of thorns, and death's-head, with two crossed bones in its mouth, similar to those that are painted in these parts.)

In some cases, carved or painted images materialized only after she envisioned them. When a sculpture of the Virgin Mary was brought to the village for a religious holy day, for example, she said she recognized it as one she had seen before in an ecstasy (182). The same occurred with an image of the Holy Trinity, which she subsequently saw on some "estampas pintadas" [59] (painted prints). Typically the figures of devils, saints, Mary, Christ, and the Trinity not only stimulated her faith—they educated her.

Madre Isabel de Jesús’s visions—and her text—illustrate the extent to which religion influenced every aspect of daily life and the ways in which it permeated her unconscious. Her ability to transpose and reintegrate realities was probably more pronounced than that of other women in this study because of her lack of formal training. Her combinations of images and ideas serve to show how most people heard poetry and prose, saw art, and believed in the supernatural. Sacred cultural artifacts, like the Cross, had magical powers and appeared in her visions frequently.

Most Catholics could see angels bearing crosses, Mary ascending heavenward, a winged soul taking flight out of purgatory, devils cavorting in hell, or a wooden saint crying. Madre Isabel may have been more sweepingly fanciful and faithful than most observers, but her blurring of the real and imagined worlds was not unusual for her time and place. Nor were people bothered by inconsistencies or anachronisms; for example, they did not question that the dress of early Christian saints as depicted in church was not different from their own. Madre Isabel’s visions also underscore how persistent in Spanish villages was the legacy of the ancient world in which "the sky hung low."

Although aware that her style was "tosco, y grosero" [109] (rough and crude), Madre Isabel asserts that it aptly describes delicate spiritual matters:

había viado [sic] mucho del zurrón, que de ordinario traía el pan en él, y para mi modo grosero me ha servido esto (aunque es lo temporal) para entender un divino estas consideraciones, aunque son groseras. (87)
(I had seen a lot of the leather pouch, which ordinarily had bread in it, and for my crude style this has served me, although in temporal fashion, to understand these reflections in a divine way, although they are but crude.)

Homely visions counterbalanced bold, original, and imaginative ones. While she sewed with her Sisters, Jesus said to her:

Te llamé hilandería, porque eres casera. Entendi que el decir casera, era decir, eres para mucho, que estás dentro de tu casa, enseñé que el estar hilando, y atrayendo a la mazorca, que era lo mismo que pasaba por el alma, que está atrayendo a si los buenos pensamientos, y que la voluntad los va recibiendo. (89)
(“I called you spinner because you are housewife”; I understood that to say “housewife” was as if to say, “you are worth a lot, because you are inside your house.” He showed me that to be spinning and drawing the spindles was just the same as what took place within the soul, which is drawing to itself good thoughts, and so the will receives them.)

She did not refrain from distilling exemplary lessons and biblical parables, even when her self-depiction showed a conforming, housebound wife. She had so internalized the religious messages of the institution she embraced, there was no taking them away from her. Rather, she claimed acknowledgment through her talent for restating them in the language of the people. She parroted of, and contributed to, a tradition of “domestic theology” that gave women a means of interpreting dogma.

**The World Turned Inside Out: From Shepherdess to Mystic**

Mysticism had many functions for Isabel de Jesús. Her visions allowed her to sever herself from one kind of life and undertake another. Through the visions she educated herself. They also led to her increased status and power in the world and to enough interest in her story to demand its recording. Psychologically, mysticism was vital to Madre Isabel’s survival. While she absorbed and internalized the culture that surrounded her, she created her own inner world in which despair was more manageable and joy more frequent. Her transforming imagination was her protection and salvation as both a child and an adult. Moreover, it enabled her to experience religious ecstasy. Her mystical life with Jesus offered recompense for suffering and allowed her to reshape her personal existence. Isabel de Jesús used her visions to overcome fear and gain self-confidence. As she developed trust in her inner life, there grew in her a sense of mission.

The tools she designed to protect herself from destruction in an alienating world included a set of self-characterizing labels such as “indigna” (unworthy), which she used to give herself an aura of humility and to refute the epithets with which others malign her. Madre Isabel refers to herself throughout her text as a “pobre labradora” and a “rustica pastorcilla.” Most likely, she had heard priests and confessors describe her in these terms. Other people called her “la loca” [65] (the madwoman), “fraylerona” [59] (friaress), “santurona” [62] (pseudo-saint), and “profetiza falsa” [120] (false prophetess). Aware of these labels, she turned to her visions for other labels that would establish her authority and bestow power: she was to be “pregonera” (town crier) of God’s magnificence (179).
Intimacy and equality with Christ are the major themes of Madre Isabel’s life story. A peasant and lay nun, Madre Isabel stood at the bottom of the social scale, but in her visionary life she acquired status as Jesus’s peer and beloved companion (412). She and Jesus are the protagonists of her book. Throughout, she uses epithets designating her lovely birth as proof of her place next to Christ: “ladrona” (57, 58); “rástica” (64); “casera,” “hidalgana” (89); “pastorica” (264); and “Pastora” (274). The epithet pastorata and its variations, which recalled her childhood, signaled an ever-stronger identification with Jesus; during the course of the narrative she—as protagonist—metamorphoses into the divine figure after whom she has named herself, Isabel de Jesús. Christ was the shepherd of all Catholicks, as she had been of her family’s flock. Her soul becomes one of his lambs: “Pastor de mi alma, y que la llevó a su divino abáho” [90] (Shepherd of my soul, who carried it away for me to His divine flock). She blended actual and metaphorical senses, adding to the earthy charm of the commonplace.

To establish a connection to Jesus by calling him “shepherd of my soul” was not, of course, unusual. But Madre Isabel expresses her special relationship to Jesus in several other ways, and these are considerably less conventional. In one of her visions, for example, Christ not only appears as a father figure—a common convention—but also prompts her autobiographical recollection. The vision begins with Christ instructing her to recall an episode from her early childhood, when she watched in terror as a wolf pinned a lamb between its jaws. Her father, who was herding not far off, heard her screams, came running, consoled her, and tried to quiet her fears, telling her he was more upset by her panic than by the loss of a lamb. In her vision, Jesus asks her to tend his lambs as she had tended her parents’ and promises to answer her cries as did her father (265). All at once, Isabel is Christ’s coworker and he is her protector, constant companion, and surrogate father.

Over time, Madre Isabel came to see herself as so close to Christ that she portrayed their relationship not only as shepherd and lamb or father and daughter but as equals who share an intimate reciprocity. She captures this reciprocity in two incidents involving tears. One Good Friday, she stands in her doorway at mealtime eating a piece of bread. Suddenly she begins to feel the pains of Christ’s suffering, and “me acudió el Señor con unas lágrimas dadas de su mano, que me sirvieron de vianda” [42-43] (the Lord came to my aid with some tears given from His hand, and these were my meal). Another day she cries while she is in mystical prayer. When she sees the Lord, she asks him where he is going. He responds, “[A] coger tus lágrimas, que me sirven de refrierno” [81] (To collect your tears, because they are refreshment and comfort to me).

An even bolder and more original way for Madre Isabel to establish her intimacy and equality with Jesus is to depict him as her lover. The autobiographer uses the image of God as lover again and again, and Christ’s characterization is strongest in this guise. Madre Isabel reports that God-Jesus speaks to her “como entre amantes se habla con lanza” [84] (as lovers speak to each other, with familiarity). On one occasion, she “sees” a cross with a poetic text decorating the vertical arm: “Rubándome el corazón de amores, dándo alivio a mis trabajos con fineza de amor” [240] (Stealing my heart with love, relieving my burdens with love’s delicacy).

Madre Isabel’s depiction of Christ as her lover obviously served the purpose of further establishing her as his intimate and equal. But just as important, it enabled her to speak—and speak freely—of such subjects as sexual feelings and fantasies, family quarrels, lack of intimacy with her husband, forced marriage, childbirth, children’s illnesses, and the temptations of adultery. For all its condemnation of sin, Madre Isabel’s manuscript conveys an impression of robust sexuality among the people she knew and in herself. Profane sensuality manifested itself ambivalently in all aspects of Spanish culture. By insisting on Christ’s jealousy, she justifies her repugnance to the overtures of the men of her village “[Dios] mandaqué que huyese de los hombres, porque no se enamorase de mi, es celoso por extremo” [41] ([God] ordered me to flee from men, so that they wouldn’t fall in love with me, for He is extremely jealous); “Vuelvo a decir cuán celoso es mi divino amante,” [187] (I repeat that my divine lover is very jealous); and “[Cristo] no quiere que trate con los hombres, sino con él” [96] ([Christ] doesn’t want me to converse with mortal men, but only with Him).

A few pages earlier, she has observed that because her husband is poor and a shepherd, “a los hombres deshonestos del mundo les incitaba el demonio, para que me persiguiesen” [90] (The Devil incited the lecherous men of the world to pursue me). “Being out in the world” meant facing the ever present danger of socially condemned abuse of poor women and the confusions and temptations that accompanied ignorance. Early in the text, she alludes to men’s offers to remedy her poverty in exchange for sexual favors and to the money she could have obtained “ofendiendo a la Magestad de Dios” [19] (offending God’s majesty). Jesus, the ideal, eternally young and beautiful lover, reined in her sexual need and softened the blows of exploitation. In accord with her religion, Madre Isabel portrays her sexual impulses as sinful but she expresses explicit sexual need and excitement. Among her writing Sisters, represented here, no other is so direct.

In this period of Spanish letters, sensuality was elaborately translated into religious terms. “In the sacred mode”—“la divina”—was a common expression used to denote the adaptation of sensual and erotic imagery to religious and mystic motifs, especially in literature. Book 1 of Madre Isabel’s Vida ends with a love song in the idiom of the romance: “Ay, prenda del alma mia! Ay, que me tienes robado el corazón! Ay, mi divino amante!” [152] (Oh, precious jewel of my soul! Alas, you have stolen my heart! Oh, my divine lover!). Christ also appears in the favored guise of a knight errant from the novels of chivalry, so popular at the time that characters, situations, and dialogue became a part of everyone’s imagination: “mi valeroso capitán... de armas blancas, caballo blanco, todo de punta en blanco” [86] (my courageous captain... in white armor, on a white horse, and everything embroidered in white).

Occasionally her rapture expresses itself in the erotic language of the Song of Songs. In the manner of those Old Testament verses, revived by contemporary dialogue, she records a visit:

Me visitó mi divino Amado una noche... Me dijo: mira cual vengo, por venirte a visitar me ha cogido el rocío de la noche, traigo el cabello lleno de escarcha... Traía un manto azul que le cubría, y no todo, porque por
device. Through it, Jesus takes on female characteristics: he bleeds, goes through labor pains (40), gives birth, and even nurses. As mother, he comforts his small children, among whom Madre Isabel holds a privileged place:

Se ha habido del Señor conniego, como una madre con sus hijos, que cuando son pequeñuelos, cobran con mucha facilidad grán miedo, y para que le pierdan, les dicen: mira que no os nado. (81)
(The Lord has treated me as a mother treats her children, when they are little things are very easily frightened and, to calm them down, their mothers say, see, there was nothing there.)

Once, Madre Isabel “sees” Jesus nursing dogs from his engorged breasts, because his own children have become ill (81-82). Madre Isabel explains that Christ’s milk-filled breasts are his mercy, but their engorgement (his pain) is a result of his children’s refusal to accept his divine word; this refusal is their illness. She assures the reader she knows what she is talking about, since she too has nursed both other people’s children, and even dogs, when her own babies died. In this example, the triple-tiered meaning that accompanies many visions is again salient: (1) the initial vision (of Christ nursing); (2) the reference to material reality and lived experience; and (3) the more abstract theological significance, which completes the lesson.

Other visions of God as mother establish a direct link between Jesus and Madre Isabel. Milk and blood sometimes are interchangeable or equated. Madre Isabel replaces Christ’s blood with her own; she reports that her mouth frequently bleeds when she takes communion (199-200). She, in turn, shares his capacity to spill blood in sacrifice for others. Christ’s blood from his wounds provides sustenance for humanity and is therefore a form of nurturance, like breast-feeding. This symbolism is made visible in the sip of wine priests take as part of communion. In creating inextricable connections between herself and Jesus through the imagery of his milk of mercy and body-blood and playing with the symbolism of fundamental religious tenets and Church dogma, Madre Isabel does what some medieval women saints had done, according to Elizabeth Petroff. They “not only reversed the traditional male and female roles...[but] also inverted the hierarchy of the Church.” Modern scholars—Bynum, Clark and Richardson, Ruetter, and Schüssler-Fiorenza, among others—have documented a long line of female religious engaged in such subversion.

Once, when she sees Christ’s back full of wounds (79), he tells her that because she loves him, his back does not bother him. The remark reminds her of how women giving birth feel; they suffer great pain in labor but afterward forgive the child who caused it, because of love. She equates Christ’s crucifixion with childbirth, because he thereby offered humanity new life. Although she calls him “father” of human-kind in this passage, she uses women’s experience to validate what is, after all, the center of the New Testament story—Christ’s sacrifice for humanity.

Through a transmuting identification with Christ that crosses and blurs gender lines, Madre Isabel develops the idea that she is a spiritual mother of humanity.
Estando pidiendo a su Magestad por mis hijos, me dio un afecto de amor tan grande... que están mis ojos hechos de fuentes. (304)

(When I was praying to God for my children, I was given such a surge of love... that my eyes have become two fountains.)

Her children include all humankind: "Yo no excluyo a nadie" (303) (I do not exclude anybody). Madre Isabel consistently reminded the reader of her exemplarity by emphasizing God’s greatness and her own lack of worth for the gifts she gave her. On the other hand, she established a level of familiarity with Christ that suggested quite the opposite of her stated unworthiness. By the time Madre Isabel "declared" who she was for all to remember, at the end of her life, she had become an emblematic character perhaps even to herself.

In addition to enabling the author to set herself up as God’s intimate, Madre Isabel’s visions enabled her to acquire an education. Her God taught her to trust her own eyes and ears for true knowledge. Dialogue with God were the source of Madre Isabel’s ruminations on the nature of knowing. The similarity of God’s opinions, as she heard them, to official Church policy demonstrates Madre Isabel’s capacity to absorb the ideology of her times, however. Her illiteracy often frustrated her, but Madre Isabel learned to measure wisdom by other yardsticks. God pointed the way, defending his reluctance to let her learn how to read:

Diciéndole yo al Señor que quisiera yo saber leer, me dijo... que no entendiese yo que todos los que saben leer, se saben aprovechar, que más es el saberse aprovechar, que el saber leer. (373-74)

(When I told the Lord that I would like to know how to read, He told me... that I shouldn’t think that all those who know how to read know how to use their knowledge, for it is more important to know how to use one’s knowledge than to know how to read.)

Placing the Lord as her advisor, Madre Isabel thus issued a thinly disguised criticism of her Superiors, tautily compared herself to others, and summarized her achievement—the intelligent and clever use of native wit and wisdom.

The educational process led Madre Isabel to ever more convoluted interpretations of the cultural and theological materials to which she was exposed as a lay nun. She became able to argue herself out of errors in biblical chronology, for instance. When Inés del Santísimo Sacramento criticized her for inserting Christ into the story of the Burning Bush, which predated his birth, she justified herself:

Aunque no se había manifestado al mundo, le tenía su Padre Eterno en su Diámeda... que cuando un Escultor ha de hacer una imagen, que la forma primero que la saque a luz, en su entendimiento, de suerte que lo que no ha hecho ve delante de sus ojos, por cuanto lo tenía ya formado. Esto es a lo humano. Volviendo a lo Divino, digo... que como tenía en su mente formada la Imagen de Cristo bien nuestro, en la Diámeda de su entendimiento, antes de ser en el mundo. (569-70)

(Although He had not yet appeared to the world, He was already set in

His Eternal Father’s crown... for when a sculptor is going to make a statue [image], he forms it first in his mind, before producing it, so that what he has not made he sees in front of his eyes, and therefore he had already formed it. This is the human way. Returning to the divine way, I say... that since He had the image of Christ... our Good in the crown of His mind, before His appearance in the world.)

Christ incarnate had no rivals among human males in beauty, gentleness, and kindness, but he spoke to Madre Isabel with the pouting, blaming, or scolding tone of any spouse. Her conversations with him have a domestic flavor; he might be a husband complaining about his wife’s work to his wife of many years. Though at times he sounded as her real husband may have, he stimulated love in ways her earthly partner never did. Christ’s was flesh she could glimpse and swoon over. He was her “true Samson” (86). Above all, he represented a “safe harbor” (84).

Although in many instances Madre Isabel was able to perceive the opinion of her confessors through her conversations with God, she could not manage intervention against officially sanctioned tradition and the Council of Trent. Her wish to have herself officially accepted as a preacher was not successful:

Me mandó el Señor un día que tenía de predicar... pero tengo esta costumbre de tomar primero parecer de los Confesores para no hacer algún desacuerdo... respondió... (que) no dio el Señor potestad más que a los hombres para que predicasen. (73)

(The Lord ordered me one day to preach... but it is my custom to consult - the opinion of my confessors first, in order not to commit a wrong... [The confessor] answered that the Lord gave only men the power to preach.)

Before giving up the effort to obey the Lord’s command, she consulted a higher authority, the confessor of the Queen’s ladies-in-waiting from Madrid, Padre Fray Juan de San Francisco. He consol’d her cleverly:

Me dijo que había muchos modos de predicar... que unos predicaban con la palabra y otros con el ejemplo, y que buen predicar había sido haber dejado mi tierra para venir a buscar al Señor, que mirase yo como había volado la fama de aquella hazaña que había hecho en haber huido del mundo. (73-74)

(He told me that there were many ways to preach... that some preached through words and others by example, and that my having left my birthplace to come to seek the Lord had been good preaching, for I should consider how far and wide my fame had spread for having fled the world.)

In the face of such opposition, God rescinded the original order and let her know she had been told the truth.

If she could not preach directly, Christ could preach through her visions. In many passages of her book, she communicates Christ’s complaints to her about the
Madre Isabel told the woman to repent and confess but did not identify this neighbor in whose salvation she was instrumental. She respected confidentiality like a confessor. In the course of the narrative Madre Isabel recounts many such incidents which, she says, caused her to be admired by some people and ostracized by others.

Visions, providing a means for her to be considered a sacred mouthpiece, established Isabel de Jesús’s right to function as a neighborhood spiritual advisor—to speak, preach, and mediate. For instance, she recounts the story of two men in her village who had been feuding for ten years without respite. When Madre Isabel asked God how to make peace, he claimed not to have any room to enter those two souls, which were crowded with devils. With her inner vision, she saw the devils inside one man. One of the devils was a toad, which swelled up so much that it took up the entire intestinal area; the other was a snake, which glistened up the esophagus to the man’s throat. These demons prevented him from hearing, seeing, or speaking the truth. Madre Isabel acted as intermediary—indeed, as an oracle—and, from behind the iron grill of the convent, brought peace between the two men. That a cloistered nun from the peasantry would deem it her business to unravel the threads of a dispute between two men shows how Madre Isabel literally saw herself as mother of all and, on a more mundane level, how nuns participated in solving social problems.

Madre Isabel’s narrative sheds a unique light on women’s lives in seventeenth-century Spain, underscoring the dangers and difficulties of female secular existence. Doubly marginalized because she was a peasant and a woman, Isabel de Jesús won power as a visionary that she could never otherwise have hoped to achieve in the rigidly gender-conscious, class-conscious society in which she lived. Some thought her crazy, some overzealous, some arrogant, but many believed her to be holy. Her visions offered her an exit from lifelong poverty, brutally demanding work, and forced marriage. They gave her relief from pain and illness and allowed her to reshape her personal existence, to educate herself, and to forge her own prayer life. Mystic ecstasy determined Madre Isabel’s ability first to achieve Christ’s companionship and ultimately to gain permission to inscribe her life in written form.

Texts and Translations

Vida de la Venerable Madre Isabel de Jesús, recoleta Augustina en el convento de San Juan Bautista de la villa de Arenas. Dictada por ella misma y añadido lo que faltó de su dichosa muerte.

Libro Primero

Me casé [mi madre] (como tengo dicho) a mi disgusto... fue la causa, el ser con quien me casaron hombre que me llevaba muchos años. Digo esto, por que no se entienda, que era virtud el no querer casarme, sino por la desigualdad del tiempo. ... Yo quisiera darme a entender; digo, como me había criado en el campo, y me trajeron a poblado, y me vistieron ya como mujer, el mundo me llevó tras sí,
FRANK A. DOMÍNGUEZ

CARAJICOMEDIA:
PARODY AND SATIRE IN EARLY MODERN SPAIN
WITH AN EDITION AND TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT

TAMESIS, 2015
Preface

Early in my academic career, I naively believed that I was acquainted with most medieval and early modern works of Spanish literature. I was therefore surprised to come across one that I had not heard of, in the Cancionero de obras de burlas provocantes a risa (Anthology of Mocking Songs that Incite Us to Laughter). This collection, which contained most of the bawdy poems of the Cancionero general, included the only known copy of Carajicomedía, which, I soon learned, had been shunned by scholars, because it was one of the most sexually explicit poems in the language. The title, however, aroused my curiosity, because I believed that “carajo” functioned primarily as an intensifying expletive in expressions as varied as “¡Vete al carajo!” (Go to hell!), “¡Estás hecho un carajo!” (You are a mess!), “¡No me importa un carajo!” (I don’t care one whit!), “¡No entiendo un carajo!” (I don’t understand a thing about it!), “¡No vale un carajo!” (It is not worth anything!). I wondered therefore how a word devoid of intrinsic meaning could be considered a profanity.

The problem—I quickly realized—was not with the word but with me. In most of Latin America, “carajo” had lost its meaning. Not so in Spain, where most people commonly knew that it means “prick,” even though its use was as malleable as in Latin America. No one who has read Carajicomedía in either hemisphere, however, can fail to realize that the title means “Prickcomedy” or “Cockcomedy,” and that it refers exclusively to that part of the male anatomy which, together with “coño” (cunt), are the most frequently-used Spanish swear words.¹

¹ The Diccionario de la Real Academia Española (DRAE) somewhat reluctantly defines “carajo” as “pene” and “voz malsuavante” (1983: 412; unpleasant term), in spite of the fact that it is a very venerable word. This disparaging attitude is shared by A. de Payés (1901: II, 198), who terms it “voz desterrada de la sociedad culta” (a term banished from refined society). The word is most likely derived from Lat. *caraculum*, “stake” or “penis” (Adam 1982, 15–16). It has been used to designate the crow’s nest of sailing ships, and it has even been suggested that the word originated in an insult directed at the Christians by the Moors: “cara de ajo” (garlic-faced). There are several euphemisms for “carajo,” among them “caray,” “caramba,” and “caracoles.” After Camilo José Cela’s Diccionario secreto (1968), the best recent discussion of the term and its accompanying bibliography is by J. M. Lipski (1976).
My initial puzzlement solved, it was followed by other, thornier questions. Carajicomedia, I discovered, was a little-known parody of Juan de Mena's very famous but now utterly unfashionable El Laberinto de Fortuna (1444, The Labyrinth of Fortune), a vision poem told by a character called Mena, which described a dream-voyage to Heaven. Intrigued, I wanted to know more about the parody and its source text. Specifically, what, about Mena's work, had triggered it? Was it a satire as well, and if so, of what type, by whom, and of whom? Because Carajicomedia was anonymous, these questions proved to be difficult to answer. They demanded that I carefully assess and compare both works in the editions then current. For Carajicomedia this was not a problem, since it appeared in print only once, in 1519. For El Laberinto, it was another matter, because it had four printings before 1500. It was soon obvious, however, that the work parodied was the first printing of Las Trezienas by Hernán Núñez (1499), because Carajicomedia parodies its prologue, which almost disappears in subsequent editions.

El Laberinto starts with the protagonist wondering why good men often come to bad ends, and brooding over the role of God in allowing this seeming injustice to occur. To answer his doubts, the goddess Bellona suddenly appears and takes the dreaming poet to meet with Divina Providencia in Heaven, who lectures him on the all-powerful nature of God and points to the insufficiency of the human intellect to understand His designs. She also identifies the historical and mythological figures that Mena sees attached to two of three great Wheels that represent the past, present, and future in Fortune's house. Each of these wheels is divided into seven circles, and each circle is ruled by one of the seven planets and exemplifies one of the Seven Virtues. However, the number of stanzas describing each of the circles, their Virtues, and exemplars, is not even. Divina Providencia does a particularly lengthy review of contemporary Spanish knights who have met their death gloriously or ingloriously in the circle of Mars and, together with the stanzas devoted to Jupiter and Saturn, these sections reveal by their length that the narrator's visit to the House of Fortune is an excuse to exhort Juan II of Castile to embrace the Reconquest. The message of El Laberinto de Fortuna is therefore anchored in those particular Virtues that Mena considers appropriate for his king and knights.

I also found that Carajicomedia, published some seventy-five years after El Laberinto was composed, references people who were alive at the time it was written and has an altogether different aim. What's more, it tells the story of an impotent knight named Diego Fajardo in two poems that are based on different sections of its model, and attributes them to two mock authors. In the first poem (stanzas 1-92), its putative author, Fray Bugeo Montesino, introduces the story; then an aged Fajardo appeals to "Luxuria" in his own voice and asks that she grant him a potion to restore his lost virility. Fray Bugeo then interrupts him.

Milwaukee
excerpt:

stanzas
1-13,
68-75
briefly to offer excuses for the flaccid state of his hero’s phallus, but Fajardo’s voice continues to relate the story from stanza 7 until stanza 91.

These stanzas describe how a silent goddess Luxuria has appeared to Fajardo as an old whore—a madam and a witch called La Zamorana—to take him to Valladolid, where another old woman, María de Vellasco, offers to help him regain his potency. María then grabs Fajardo by his exposed member and leads him to Valladolid’s public whorehouse, where he has a vision of some thirty-six “putas terrestres visibles y casi inuifiles” from all over the world, who remind him of his former sexual prowess.²

After enduring La Zamorana and María’s attempts to revive his prick through masturbation and acknowledging that whores now inspire him with fear, Fajardo looks at his still-exposed genitals and has a second vision of some thirty-five additional whores, who belong to the Orders of the Moon and Venus. Between these two hallucinations, he instructs his prick on how it should conduct itself with whores and comments on how impotence affects everyone in old age. Then, just as the first poem nears its end, Fajardo stumbles onto a confrontation between armies of personified cunts and pricks. María de Vellasco advises him to ignore the clash, because it is too dangerous to speak about one of its prominent leaders. Fajardo takes her advice and ruminates instead on the nature and effect of lust on men. He concludes by saying that even the “knowledge” imparted by his guide is insufficient to undo the enmity of Luxuria. Fray Bugeo then resumes the role of narrator in the last stanza to utter a mock apology for his work’s obscene nature and comments on the pervasiveness of lust in the world.³

Altogether, the first poem dedicates 37 of its 92 stanzas to describing prostitutes, and their stories are often amplified by prose glosses that parody those in Las Trezientos. In contrast, the much shorter second poem (stanzas 93–117) does not allude to any specific whores. Instead, it is based on El Laberinto’s account of the tragic death of one of the great heroes of the Reconquest, Enrique de Guzmán, second Count of Niebla, who drowned during a sea-assault on the castle of Gibraltar with eight of his men. Carajicomedia turns this siege into a mock-attack, led by Diego Fajardo and a horde of personified pricks, on a whorehouse defended by a bevy of cunts. The attack ends when his army of pricks is “drowned” by (i.e. “in”) the cunts.

² Fajardo’s penis appears to be exposed throughout the work. Its nakedness is emphasized when his second vision is projected onto his genitals (stanzas 52–57). According to stanza 5, however, these prostitutes represent only a small fraction of the two thousand whores he has known.

³ Although Fajardo does not die in the narrative of the first poem, its first gloss intimates as much. It tells us that his last wish is to send his relics (genitalia) to Rome to be venerated in the Coliseum. Carajicomedia therefore is, among other things, a mock elegy.
Carajicomedía: A Modern Spanish Edition

Síguese una especulativa obra intitulada Carajicomedía, compuesta por el Reverendo Padre Fray Bugeo Montesino, imitando el alto estilo de las Trescientas del famosísimo poeta Juan de Mena, dirigida al muy antiguo carajo del noble Diego Fajardo que en nuestros tiempos en gran lujuria floreció en la ciudad de Guadalajara, por cuyo fin sus lastimados cojones fueron llevados y trasladados en la romana ciudad, cuya vida y martirio la presente obra recuenta.

Muy magnífico señor,

Como un día entre otros muchos oradores me hallase en la copiosa librería del colegio del señor San Extravagante, donde al presente resido, leyendo unos sermones del devoto Padre Fray Bugeo Montesino, hallé la presente obra que este Reverendo Padre compilió para su recreación después que corrigió el Cartujano. Y porque me parece cosa contemplativa y devota para reír, acordé de la trasladar del fingido lenguaje en que casi como infección poética estaba en este cruel castellano en que va, y así mismo, sobre ello, lo mejor que según mi devoción pudiere, declarará algunas oscuras sentencias que en ella hay, con alegaciones de los acostumbrados autores que en ella se verán, considerando el trabajo que en ello tomase ser servicio a vuestra merced, y provecho a los oyentes, y a mí, descanso. Y sí, según las grandes mercedes que de vuestra merced he recibido, pequeño servicio éste le pareciere, para mi disculpe le suplico se acuerde del famoso bicho de Virgilio: “No es cosa menos regia el recibir poco que el dar mucho.”

¡Al muy impotente carajo profundo de Diego Fajardo, de todos abuelo,
que tanta parte se ha dado del mundo,
que ha cuarenta años que no mira al cielo!
¡Aquél que con coños tuvo tal celo,
Cockcomedy

What follows is a speculative work entitled Caragicomedia composed by the Reverend Father Fray Bugeo Montesino in imitation of the lofty style of the Trezientas by the very famous poet Juan de Mena, dedicated to the ancient cock of the noble knight Diego Fajardo who, in our time, flourished in great lust in the city of Guadalajara, [and] at whose end, his sorrowful balls were taken and transported to the city of Rome. [and] whose life and martyrdom the present work recounts.

Most Magnificent Lord,

One day, I chanced to be in the company of many other friars in the very large library of the school of my lord St Extravagant, where I presently reside, reading some sermons by the pious father Fray Bugeo Montesino, when I came across this work that the Reverend Father compiled for his amusement after he revised the Carthusian. And, because it seemed to me to be conducive to contemplative and devout entertainment, I determined to translate it from the dissembling language in which it was written—almost by poetic infection—into this crude Castilian in which it will reach you. I will also explain some difficult passages found in the work to the best of my ability, citing the customary authorities quoted in it, thinking that any effort I expend on it might be of service to your lordship, profit those who hear it, and contribute to my own enjoyment. And, if this seems to you too small a service with which to repay the great benefits that I have received from your lordship, as my excuse, I beg you to recall the famous gnat of Virgil: "It is no less noble to accept a small gift than to give lavishly."

To the utterly impotent deep-plunging cock of Diego Fajardo, grandfather of all, who, as all the world knows for full forty years has not looked at the sky! To it, who with cunts showed such great zeal,

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1 Caragicomedia transforms the Latinate language of El Laborinto into plain Castilian. I have therefore opted to refer to Fajardo's phalus ("carajo") with the English slang terms "cock" and "prick."
cuánto ellos de él tienen ahora des[al]grado! 
¡Aquél que está siempre cabeza abajo, 
que nunca levanta su ojo del suelo!

Así, muy magnífico señor, como cualquiera obra para ser más durable requiere tener muy firme cimiento, así ésta, para mejor ser entendida, conviene en esta primera copla hacer perfecta declaración, pues es paso primero y comienzo dónde toda se funda. Y para esto, es de saber que este Diego Fajardo fue un caballero de Guadalajara de noble linaje, en cuyo nacimiento crueles señales mostraron su vida. Del cual afirma una gran puta vieja que hoy en la dicha ciudad reside, que fue su partera, que nació la lengua sacada, y regañado y arrecho. Así mismo, se lee de su vida en el Putas de los padres que desde doce o trece años tomó tanta devoción con Venus, que dejadas las obras militares y vanidades de este mundo, las más noches andaba desatacado de puta en puta. De esto son autores infinitos trincaderos de ellas. Así mismo se lee que, siendo ya venido a la vejez, y conociendo sus grandes pecados, que en su juventud había cometido, se acordó de retraer en un apartado tabanco o bodegón, y allí, sentado en una silla, continuamente le veían con el miembro en la mano izquierda y la derecha abierta, llena de cuartos y ardis con que daba crecidas lombes a los pobres coños que por allí pasaban. Y continuando el lujurioso caballero esta vida, cargándole más la vejez, no pudiendo ya tomar reflexión su carne, fue forzado caer en cama. Y allí estando, a cuántos le venían a ver, contaba las lujuriosas hazañas que en su vida había cometido. Y como ya él conocióse ser en los posteriores días de su vida, un día hizo convocar muchos coños, y predicóles gran rato, incitando los cojones muy largos y el pendejo muy blanco. Movidos a risa, dieron ante él crudas risadas, despreciando sus amonestaciones. De lo cual, él, movido a gran dolor, mando bajo pena de su visión, que muerto su carajo, fuese llevado al Coliseo de Roma, diciendo tales palabras: “O ingrata patria no poseerás mi natura.” Y asiéndose de los cojones, su amortiguado carajo expiró, quedando el triste Fajardo en la cama, donde hoy en día permanece; y, para su consolación, este breve tratado le fue compuesto por el sobredicho padre.

Habla el autor. Co. ii

¡Tus casos falaces—Carajo—cantamos, 
tus ferociidades, bravezas no pocas! 
Dices que sueles romper por las rocas, 
y de esto mil coños quejosos hallamos, 
que júntanse y dicen: “¡No le creamos,
as many as today look at it with disgust!
To it, whose head is perpetually down
and no longer lifts its eye from the ground!

Because, most magnificent lord, any work has to have a firm underpinning to be lasting, it is fitting that this one, in order to be better understood, be supplemented in its initial stanza with a clear explanation, as befits the first step and basic foundation for the entire text. For this reason, let it be known that this Diego Fajardo was a knight of Guadalajara, of noble lineage, at whose birth cruel signs foretold of his life. A renowned old whore, who today resides in the said city, and who was his midwife, attests to the fact that he was born with outthrust tongue, grimacing, and with an erection. One also reads in the *Whores of the Fathers* about his life: that from the age of twelve or thirteen, he showed such devotion to Venus that—turning away from military service and the vanities of this world—most nights he wandered with unlaced breeches from whore to whore. An infinite number of their creaking cots give testimony to this fact. One also reads that having reached his old age and understanding the great sins that he had committed in his youth, he retired to a remote public taproom or tavern, where he was constantly seen sitting on a chair, with his member in his left hand and with the right one outstretched and open, full of small change with which he gave great alms to the poor cunts that passed his way. And, because this sinful knight persisted in this type of life—every day more subject to the snares of old age until his earthly body was no longer capable of receiving sustenance—he was forced to take to his bed, from where he regaled all who came to see him with stories of the wicked deeds he had committed in life. And, realizing that he had reached the end of his existence, one day he gathered around him many cunts and preached to them: for a long while, shaking his very long balls and hoary pubic hair. Stirred to laughter, they cruelly mocked him, spurning his admonitions. Whereupon, annoyed by the great pain they caused, he commanded that, on his death, his cock was to be taken to the Roman Coliseum under threat of returning to haunt them as a spirit [if they did not comply], saying these words, “Oh, ungrateful fatherland, you will not have my genitals,” and, as he clutched his balls, his afflicted cock expired, leaving the said Fajardo in the bed, where he is to this day, and, for his consolation, this brief treatise was written by the aforesaid Father.

The author speaks. Stanza 2

Of your fraudulent deeds—Oh Cock!—we do sing,
of your forgeries and innumerable bold feats!
You claim to break near the reefs,
yet, on this we have found a thousand carping cunts
that in unison say: “Let us pay him no heed.
puis que le vemos más flojo que espuma,
además de esto, tiene tan blanca la pluma,
que sólo de verlo descuido tomamos!"

En la declaración de la primera copla se contiene lo que en ésta por excusar prolijidad se calla, por no tener nueva sentencia.

Llama e invoca Diego Fajardo a la Lujuria Copla 3.

"¡O tú, Lujuria, me sed favorable,
dándome alas de ser muy furioso;
y tú no consientas tal caso injurioso,
en éste tan tuyo, y tan amigable,
que estoy tan perdido irrecuperable,
que ya no se espera de mí más simiente!
Soy aborrecido de toda la gente,
que no hay en el mundo cohíno que me hable."

Así como los poetas acostumbran invocar las musas les ayuden en sus obras así Fajardo no conociendo otra musa invoca a la Lujuria en su vejez.

Disculpa el autor a Fajardo. Copla 4

"Cierro, no creo que fuesen menores
sus viejos deseos de entrar en la lid,
que fueron los hechos del famoso Cid,
—el uno en vallas y el otro en amores—,
mas la senectud y esquivos dolores
por largo discurso le tienen en cama,
y tiene el amargo dañada la fama,
por ser de sus obras los coños autores."

Quién fue el Cid en España es muy manifiesto; y quién Diego Fajardo sea, ya se ha dicho algo; y cuantas putas hay en Castilla lo saben y son de ello autoras.

Torna a invocar Diego Fajardo a la Lujuria. Copla 5

"Ya, pues, derrama de tus caldas fuentes,
de tantos ardores, a mí uno solo,
y haz mi carajo más tiso que bolo,
for we see him lighter than foam,
and so white, furthermore, is his plume,
that all caution we lose at his sight!"

The explanation of the first stanza contains what this gloss does not repeat to avoid prolixity, because there is nothing new to add.

Diego Fajardo calls and invokes Lust. Stanza 3

“Oh you, Lust, grant me a boon,
furnish me wings to be highly enraged,
and don’t let such a terrible fate
befall one so utterly yours, and so supportive a friend;
for I am so forlorn, so beyond remedy,
that no more seed is expected of me!
I am loathed by the entire human race,
for no cunt in the world speaks to me!”

As poets commonly invoke the Muses for help with their works, Fajardo, not knowing any other Muse, invokes Lust in his old age.

The author excuses Fajardo. Stanza 4

“Certainly, I believe no lesser were
his former desires to enter into the fray
than were the exploits of the famous Cid,
one in combat, the other in passion.
However, old age and dire pains
have long-since confined him to bed,
where he lies embittered, sullied his fame,
because cunts authored his deeds.”

Who the Cid was is very well known in Spain, and who Fajardo might be has already been partly said and is already known to as many whores as there are in Castile, for they are responsible for his condition.

Diego Fajardo invokes Lust once more. Stanza 5

“Oh, tip out from your hot springs
—from among your fiery balms—only one for me
to make my cock stiffer than a bowling-pin,
que pueda hacer mentirosas las gentes.
A esto que pido mostrarios presentes
dos mil putas viejas, pasadas, que lloro
con armonía del dulce tesoro
con que gozabades los inocentes."

Discúlpale más y compara. Copla 6

"La gran Babilonia, que hubo cercada
la madre de Nino de tierra cocida,
si ya por el suelo nos es destruida,
¿cuánto más presto carajo cansado?;
y si los muros que Febo ha trabado,
argólica fuerza pudo subvertir,
razón es que haga curso el joder
en quien tanto tiempo lo ha ejercitado."

En esta copla y sus historias me remito a Juan de Mena. En lo que toca a Diego Fajardo, claro parece al pie de la letra.

Invoca el mismo Diego Fajardo a una puta vieja, alcahueta y hechicera. Copla 7

"Dame remedio, pues tú sólo una
eres a quien pedirle me atrevo,
pues resucitas y haces de nuevo
lo muerto, lo viejo, sin duda ninguna.
¡Pon mi potencia en cuerno de luna!
¡Las venas del miembro extiendan, engorden!
¡Vayan mis hechos en tanta desorden
que no deje casa que no tenga cuna!"

Quién esta puta vieja sea dicen muchos pregoneros ser natural de Zamora, en donde, en pago de sus dos oficios, públicamente fue azotada y encorazada. Y vinose a la villa de Valladolid, donde se llama La Zamorana. Aquí puso tienda de sus obras, y la mantiene mucho a su provecho y costa de los que con ella tratan. Y, cierto, sus dictados no están en ella mal empleados, la cual yo muy bien conozco por devoción que tengo en su botica con su hija.
so that it can disprove all those calumnious lies.
In support of my petition I ask that two thousand
departed old whores testify, for whom I mournfully
weep remembering the treasured sweetness
with which they delighted in innocent fools."

He further exculpates him and makes a comparison. Stanza 6

“Great Babylon—which the mother of Nino
surrounded with baked earth—,
aren’t its walls now cast to the ground?
How much quicker will a tired cock do the same?
And, if the walls that Phoebus contrived,
the power of Argus managed to destroy,
is it not reasonable that fucking equally come to an end,
in someone who has been at it so long?”

In this stanza and its stories I commend you to go to Juan de Mena. The part
about Fujardo is clearly explained below.

The very same Diego Fujardo invokes an old whore
who is a go-between and a witch. Stanza 7

“Give me solace, for of you alone
dare I ask for this boon,
because you revive and renew
the dead, the old without hesitation!
Raise my might up to the horn of the Moon!
Lengthen [and] fatten the veins of my member!
Let my deeds so disorderly flow
that no house be lacking a cradle!”

Many town criers say that this old whore was from Zamora, where, in payment
for her two trades, she was publicly flogged and condemned to wear a crown. She
came to Valladolid, where she is called the Zamoran. Here she established her
workshop and maintains it much to her profit and at the expense of those who
traffic with her; and the accounts they [the town criers] provide are in no way
misplaced. I know her very well, because of the devotion that I have in her quarters
with her daughter.
Disputa Diego Fajardo con esta vieja. Copla 8

“¡La regla del culo ejemplo te sea! ¡Miral, conoce su grande deporte, cuando cojones le son contrahorte, o arrecho carajo quizás devanea bajando el encuentro de donde desea! Que éste tal caso, en muy breve suma, pone a deshora al coño en gran ruma, pensando quién ley itálica crea.”

En esta copla de arriba, disputando Diego Fajardo con la vieja, la ejemplifica que mire el gran sinsabor que el coño toma cuando algún mal hombre deja a él por su cagado vecino. Al efecto de lo que dice, adelante se dirá en la siguiente copla.

Prosigue Diego Fajardo rogando ala vieja. Copla 9

“Pues como tú, vieja, regir tales cosas con grandes maneras y orden te place, ¡pon en mi miembro algo que alce las venas vejazas, que están desecosas de ver sus narices sañudas, mocosas, y haz que se queden así tan eternas, que a todas las cricas, futuras, modernas, espanten y pongan menazas furiosas!”

Prosigue. Copla 10

“Mas, bien acatada tu vieja semblanza, parécesme bruja, sin otro distante, maguer seas mujer ya muy vacilante. Por esto me cumple seguir tu ordenanza, pues eres nacida por darme esperanza con antiguos coños, de ambos a dos. ¡Remédiamme presto! ¡Ven presto, por Dios! ¡Hagamos en coños muy cruda venganza!”
Diego Fajardo disputes with this old woman. Stanza 8

“Let the Rule of the Arse be a lesson to you!
Look! Know its great joy
when bollocks are ranged against it
or a stiff cock perchance goes astray,
lowering its sights from the place it desires!
(For such a subject, in brief,
quickly makes the cunt tetchy, as she mulls over
who might believe in Italy’s law.)”

In this stanza below, Diego Fajardo disputes with the old woman and tells her
to look, for example, at the great displeasure the cunt has, when any man leaves
it for its shitty cousin. His words on this matter will be told in the stanza that
follows.

Diego Fajardo continues pleading with the old woman. Stanza 9

“Since you, old hag, in ruling such things
with grand manner and order take pleasure,
place on my member something to rouse
its very old veins—for they are desirous of
seeing its nostrils dripping with fury—
and allow them to stay that way forever:
Frightful and furiously threatening
to all cunts, future and modern!”

He continues. Stanza 10

“But more closely scrutinizing your wizened old face,
I imagine you’re a witch, without any doubt,
although you are also a tottering old woman.
That’s why it behooves me to follow your rule,
for you are the one fated to give me encouragement
with all the old cunts I have known. We are birds of a feather!
Come at once to my aid! Come quickly, by God!
Let’s take the cruelest reprisals on cunts!”

2 This gloss appears before the stanza in Carajicomedia. This edition and translation place
it below the stanza for the sake of consistency.
Habla Diego Fajardo con la vieja y compara.

Copla 11

"Como carajo que va en el poniente, si halla algún coño que no sufre punta, se dobla, se vuelve, porque barrunta su fuerza allí no ser suficiente. Empero el carajo del barbiponiente, si sus cojones el culo sintieron, nunca descansan hasta que vieron, el coño rompido que está paciente."

Ésta es una hermosa comparación, y van en ella muy devotos entendimientos para personas contemplativas.

Habla Diego Fajardo con la vieja aplicándole la comparación.

Copla 12

"Así, puta vieja, cruel, aborr[e]jida, viendo tus gestos que son infernales mi par de cojones se ponen iguales, y aprietan mi pija que está muy sumida. Mas ya porque sea de ti socorrida, pues vive la triste marchita y en rueda, ¡llevame, vieja, allá donde pueda alzarse con gozo de tan gran caída!"

Ficción que pone el mismo Diego Fajardo. Copla 13

No bien formadas mis voces serían, cuando muy brava sentí mi pijona, y luego me lleva la vieja matrona a mil trincaderos que putas tenían; y cuando las nalgas no bien remecían, heríalas ésta con duro flagelo. ¡Tanto, que andaban tan altas del suelo, que nunca caderas en tierra ponían!
Fajardo speaks with the old woman and makes a comparison. Stanza 11

“Like a cock that sails into the setting sun,
and comes across a cunt that is not easily pierced,
might bend and retreat, suspecting
its strength insufficient.
In contrast, a callow youth’s cock,
when its balls feel the arse,
ever let up until they’ve seen
the cunt under them penetrated.”

This is a beautiful comparison and contains many devout understandings for contemplative persons.

Fajardo speaks with the old woman, explaining to her the comparison. Stanza 12

“So, aged old hag—cruel hateful one—,
seeing your devilish features,
my two balls cover together
and hide behind my quite shrunken cock.
But, it’s time it be aided by you
for sadly it lives, withered and racked!
Take me, old crone, to a place where it might
rise again in delight from the cruellest of falls!”

Fiction drawn by the very same Diego Fajardo. Stanza 13

No sooner were my words uttered
than I felt my big cock fiercely roused,
the old matron then took me
to [visit] a thousand cots and their whores,
and, when their arses swayed out of sinc,
she layed into them with an uncharitable whip.
So much so, that they flew so high off the floor
that their hips were never on the ground!

now to stanza 68
Definición de impotencia.

Copla 84 de Juan de Mena y 68 de esta cuenta

"Es impotencia un decaimiento
de pija y cojones, después de ya cuando
la barba del hombre está blanqueando,
remoto por obras y por pensamiento.
No solamente por viejo yo cuento
quien barba y cabello en blanco transmuda,
más el que de floja, jodiendo trasuda,
da cojonadas aprisa, sin tiento."

Comienza la última orden de Venus generalmente aplicada. Copla
100 de Juan de Mena y 69 de esta cuestión

Venidos a Venus, vi en grado caudal
los que, en el fuego de su juventud,
dicen joder ser santa virtud,
por el tocamiento matrimonial.
A todas partes vi gran general
por gula del coño caídos en mengua,
que no sabe como se diga mi lengua,
cual de ellas todas será principal.

Copla 90 de Juan de Mena y de esta cuenta 70

Estabas, Lobilla, muy vergonzosa,
veniendo la honra del triste marido,
de recios cojones tu seso vencido;
quisiste ser puta, mas no deseosa.
"¡O, siglo nuestro, edad trabajosa,
sí hallarían los que a ésta buscasen,
dónde] desarrechar, si bien lo pagasen,
aunque tuviesen la pija sarnosa!"

Esta señora Lobilla es nombre patronímico "derivado del nombre" Alonso Lobos, su marido. Reside en Valladolid cabe San Salvador. Léese de esta señora que siendo niña un día, oyendo el Santo Evangelio, tomó por sí aquella palabra santa del Redentor, que dice: "Al que a mi viene, no le hecho fuera hasta el nuevo día." La Guarda es mujer de gran fuerza, y tan maños que muchas veces espera a su marido, que casi como venado viene bramando.
Definition of impotence.
Stanza 84 of Juan de Mena and 68 of this count

Impotence is a slow failure
of cock and balls that creeps upon one
when a man's beard begins to whiten,
[and] he fails in deed and in thought.
I consider aged not only
those whose beard and hair turns white,
but also he who readily sweats when he fucks,
[and] gives strokes that are quick and wide off the mark.

The last Order of Venus commences applied generally.
Stanza 100 of Juan de Mena and 69 of this matter

When we came to Venus, I saw a large number
of those who, in the ardor of youth,
consider fucking the holiest of virtues,
because of the commandment to marry.
And everywhere, I saw a great many
diminished in estate by cravings of cunt,
[so many] that my tongue does not know
who is the most stricken.

Stanza 90 of Juan de Mena and 70 of this count

"Lobilla, you were shamefacedly
selling the honor of your benighted husband!
Your reason was overcome by muscle-bound bollocks.
Whore you wanted to be, but not overwhelmed by desire!
Woe is our time! Arduous age!
Those searching for her would find
where to unload if they handsomely paid:
Even cocks with the mange!"

This lady Lobilla's [name] is a patronymic "derived from the name" Alonso Lobos,
his husband. She lives in Valladolid next to the church of San Salvador. One reads
about this lady, that as a child, one day, listening to the New Testament, she took
to heart that holy word of Our Redeemer which says: "I will not cast out whosoever
comes to me and even unto the new day." The Guarda is a very strong and cunning
woman, who often waits for her husband to come [home]. He comes like a rutting
ella, y hurtándole el cuerpo con las manos le traba tan recio de los cuernos que a fuerza de brazos le hace besar la tierra. Autores son dos cuernos grandes que tiene pintados en sus reposteros, y otros muchos que tiene para servicio de su casa.

La Orden de Salamanca y Toledo. Copla 91 de Juan de Mena y 71 de esta cuestión

No buenamente te puedo callar,  
¡o, Mariblanca!, ni tanto desmán,  
que estás en el paso más hondo de afán,  
y nunca das fin jamás en amblar.  
¿Cuál cachondez te pudo indignar?  
Isabel La Roja, cargada de leyes,  
que dejas seguir las cortes de reyes  
por estudiantes continuo avezar.

Esta Mariblanca reside en un mesón en Salamanca al Paso de la Vega. Es mujer muy retraída de vergüenza, y que tiene gran abstinencia de casidat. Léese de ella que, siendo amiga de un estudiante, una mañana estando en la cama, y habiendo él acabado de pasar carrera, ella se hincó de rodillas en la cama, puestas las manos contra el cielo, mirando a un crucifijo, y hinchándosele los ojos de agua con devoción, a grandes voces dijo: "¡O, Señor, por los méritos de tu Santa Pasión, si merced en este mundo me has de hacer, sea ésta, que en mis días no carezca de tal hombre cómo éste!" Dícele más, que dice esta señora, cuando se halla entre otras dueñas de su trato, que al tiempo que tiene el carajo en el cuerpo, que se querría hallar en un tesoro cerro, que está fuera de la ciudad media legua, por dar gritos a su placer. Muchos doctores afirman que en su juventud anduvo peregrinando por puterías y burdeles, empero Bartulo y el Baldo lo contradicen en el título "De las opiniones de las mujeres." Son bien variables. "Creo que esto está en acuerdo con su disposición." Isabel La Roja. Señores, deben saber que casi fue arca de todo el Testamento Viejo, ahora, por inspiración de los dioses, es vuelta en cristiana nueva, que en nuestro vulgar castellano llamamos tornadiza. Reside en Salamanca. Mujer bien hermosa, tiene audiencia real noche y día. Por otra parte, amaestra muchachos. Es imponentora de estudiantes. Tiene un coño tan grande como los pantanos Meotios. Pésale de que encuentra con algún buen jodedor, diciendo que ¿quién pudo sacar tan buen oficial? Cuando algunos pasan por allá, que no saben su casa, ella les dice luego: "Aquí está mi descanso." Y otras grandes cosas cuentan de ella que mi cortedad no publica salvo que ella vive por registro del Naevo y Viejo Testamento.
deer towards her, and she avoids him and with her hands takes him so strongly by the horns that she makes him kiss the earth. Authorities [for this story] are the two big horns that she has had painted on her shield, and many others that she has for the service of her house.

The Order of Salamanca and Toledo. Stanza 91 of Juan de Mena and 71 of this matter

“I can hardly pass over you in silence
—Oh, Mariblanca!—nor much misfortune!
You are in the deepest clutches
of need and can never be quit of your whoring.
What craving led you astray?
Isabel the Red, so riddled by laws
that you forsake royal courts
for the continual ministrations of students.”

This Mariblanca lives in a Salamancan inn on Paso de la Vega. She is a woman who is absolutely devoid of shame and greatly abstains from chastity. One reads of her, that while a lover of a student, one morning in bed, just after fucking, she went on her knees on the bed, raised her hands to Heaven and, looking at a crucifix, her eyes brimming with tears, loudly said with devotion: “Oh, Lord, for the merits of your Holy Passion, if you were to grant me your mercy in this world let it be that in my time I do not lack a man such as this.” More is told of what this lady says when she is with other ladies of her profession: that, when she has a cock in her body, she would prefer to be on a hill or a cliff half a league from the city so that she could shout her pleasure out loud. Many doctors maintain that she spent her youth making pilgrimages to whorehouses and brothels, but Bartolo and the Baldo contradict this view in “On the Opinions of Women.” They are very fickle! “I can well believe that it is possible according to their character.” Isabel the Red. Gentlemen, you should know that she was almost the ark of the entire Old Testament. Now, by the inspiration of the gods, she has become a new Christian—what in our vulgar Castilian we call a turncoat. She lives in Salamanca. A very beautiful woman, she holds royal audience night and day. She also teaches children [and] is an instructor of students. Her cunt is as big as a muddy pond. She is displeased when she comes across a good fucker [that is not known to her], saying, “Where could such a good official have come from?” When some unknowingly pass her house without entering, she then adds, “Here is my rest,” and other great things that they say about her, which I do not tell for brevity’s sake, except to say that she lives from the register [of the] New and Old Testament.
Copla 104 de Juan de Mena y de esta cuenta 72

De Las Bejaranas, la madre gigante,
allá la hallamos, que toda se alacía,
terciendo su hija con mucha falacia;
y luego Pedrosa estaba delante,
con el desainado Moreno, su amante,
llorando sus tristes autos, indignos;
y vi a Beatrizca, con los agustinos
y ordenes todas, cumplir su talante.

Bejaranas son madre e hija, que cumplen bien el proverbio, si puta la madre, etc. Empero ya ella traspasa su derecho en la hija, y tercia lo posible. Hacen las dos lo que pueden. Viven en Salamanca a la Cabestrería, porque allí es casi como priora de algunas hagasas que allí están en religión, y merece cualquier dignidad. Pedrosa reside en Salamanca. Es mujer gruesa, gran nalguda. Ésta desainó al Bachiller Moreno a fuerza de amolar. Entre otras cosas que de ella son públicas es que, estando jodiendo, desata con los dedos de los pies un paño de tocar al que tiene encima, y en aquel acto está como rabiosa, dando bocados dónde] puede, y a las veces muerde las sábanas, o manta, o almohadas, y atápase las narices y oídos por no resollar. Beatrizca bien ha sus 31 años, mas, aunque haya ochenta, nunca será Beatriz, porque ésta es maldición que le dió la diosa Morales, porque se echó con un amigo. Vive en Salamanca y hasta hoy no se halla estudiante haber venido allí que no la haya cabalgado. Nunca licenciado ni doctor allí se hizo a quien ella no examinase primero si era hábil y, si le halla tal, dale su voto.

Copla 105 de Juan de Mena y de esta cuenta 73

Tanto anduvimos rincones mirando,
que nos hallamos en las mancebías
a dónde] Las Cáceres gastaban sus días.
¡En Toledo saben el cómo y el cuándo!
Y más adelante vi estar cojeando
Isabel de Ayala, de nuestra nación,
dónde] vi que llorando dice tal canción,
en hechizíaco verso gritando
Stanza 104 of Juan de Mena and 72 of this count

Of the Bejaranas, we saw the mother—a giant
all shrivelled to nothing—
with shrewdness pandering her daughter;
and then Pedrosa appeared before us
with her wasted lover, Moreno,
lamenting her indecorous acts;
and I saw little Beatrice with the Augustinians
and all other Orders gorging herself.

The Bejaranas are a mother and daughter that fit the proverb: “If the mother is a whore,” etc. However, she already ceded her rights to her daughter and makes her living however possible. Both do what they can. They live in Salamanca in the street of the Corders, because she [the mother] lives there as almost a prioress of some harlots who have taken up religion, and she merits whatever dignity [she gets]. Pedrosa lives in Salamanca. She is a fat woman, big-assed. This one has emaciated Bachelor Moreno by dint of her frequent love-making. Among other things that are of note about her is that, while fucking, she unties with her toes a cloth that covers her hair when she sleeps and, while in the act, she behaves rabidly, biting whatever she can, sometimes sinking her teeth into the sheets or blanket or pillows, and covering her nose and ears in order not to pant. Little Beatrice is well over thirty-one years old, but even if she were eighty, she will never be Beatrice because of the curse the goddess Morales put on her, when she bedded a friend of hers. She lives in Salamanca and, even today, there is no student who goes there who has not ridden her. Never was a licentiate or a doctor trained there that she did not first examine to see if he was well endowed, and if she finds him so, she gives him her vote.

Stanza 105 of Juan de Mena and 73 of this count

We wandered so much, exploring all corners,
that we found ourselves in the brothels
where the Caceres squandered their days
—in Toledo they know the how and the when—,
and a little later I saw haltingly walking,
Isabel de Ayala, of our very own nation,
who I saw weepingly bellow this song
in bewitching and earsplitting verse:
Esta Cáceres se dice que tomó tan gran devoción en la putería de Toledo que ha más de treinta años que no sale de allí a Dios. Es su costumbre estar a su puerta, muy devota, enclavijada sus manos, cantando lamentaciones; muchas veces recibiendo el precio de su persona hallando dinero falsos. Comenzó “entonces a hacer imprecaciones, y a jurar.” Es mujer muy antigua en este trato. Muchas buenas cosas se leen de ella. Isabel de Ayala es una gran puta vieja, no disimulando su alcabuelería. Residió gran tiempo en Guadalajara, hasta que le fue allí librado un centenario, y con el cantar de la Reina, y acosándole las moscas, fue dada en exilio. La cual se fue a Toledo, y allí hace hoy en día milagros, especialmente una recién casada que había parido tres veces. La noche de la boda, encomendándose a esta noble vieja, le fue restituida su virginidad en tal manera que el novio, reñendo de tan cerrado virgo y tan flojas tetas, tomó una candela, y mirando las partes coñatas, vió dadas crueles puntadas en los besos del coño, las cuales cortando con gran dolor de la novia, luego fue por misterio de los dioses, abierto un grandísimo piélago, de lo cual el triste novio muy espantado “la abandonó.”

Copla 106 de Juan de Mena y de esta cuenta 74

“¡Amores me dieron coroza, señores, porque mi nombre por más bocas ande, que puesto que fuese de chico o de grande, yo les hacía cumplir sus amores! ¡Frailes, abades, sochantres cantores, cantad me estos versos que tanto me placen, pues tengo por bien el mal que me hacen, obispo de aca día, por darme dulzeros!”

Copla 107 de Juan de Mena y de esta obra 75

“¡Huid, reverendos y obispo nombrado, huid de pensar el bien en que os visteis, que ya sería mal, pues que perdisteis, la negociadora que habíades cobrado! Si ahora se os diese tan bien negociado, como en mi tiempo (aún algo peor), no hallaríades coño traidor, ni desesperar carajo hinchado.”
This Cacaeres, it is said, boasts so great a following in the brothel of Toledo, that she does not leave the place [in order to pray] to God. She is usually to be found at her door, with her hands devoutly crossed, singing laments, many times being paid for her work with counterfeit money. "Then [she] began to curse and swear." She has been long at this job. One can read many good things about her. Isabel de Ayala is a great old whore. Not to belittle her panderings, she lived for a long time in Guadalajara until she was whipped a hundred times and, accompanied by the sound of the Queen's crier and smothered by flies, was exiled. She then went to Toledo, where she performs miracles to this day, especially on a recent bride, who had already given birth three times. The night of her wedding, because of the ministrations of this old woman [Isabel de Ayala], her virginity was restored in such a way that the groom, cursing the narrowness of the cunt, when her teats were so loose, took a candle and, while examining her cunt parts, saw some cruel stitches on the lips of the cunt, which he cut, to the great pain of the bride. Whereupon a deep chasm was then revealed by the mystery of the gods, at which the sad groom was greatly horrified. "He abandoned her."

Stanza 106 of Juan de Mena and 74 of this work

"Love crowned me, my Lords,
to bring my name to the lips of more people,
for whether of little or large,
I made them all attain their desires!
Friars, abbots, subcantors, chorus,
sing me these verses that please me so much,
for the delightful pain that they cause
—Oh, newly-minted bishop!—intended to sweeten my soul!"

Stanza 107 of Juan de Mena and 75 of this work

"Flee reverend fathers and bishop-pretender!
Flee from all thought of your fortunate past,
because it has come to naught when you lost
the go-between from your employ.
If you could make as good a transaction today
as in my time—or even a little worse—,
you would not find a traitorous cunt
or a swollen cock in despair."